

THE STORY
OF BURMA

E. G. HARMER



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THE STORY OF THE EMPIRE

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OF
BURMA

BY
ERNEST GEORGE HARMER

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CHAPTER I

THE GOLDEN CHERSONESE

AT certain seasons of the year the traveller who chances to be passing through a Burmese village often comes at nightfall upon a crowd of people seated placidly upon the highway. The eyes and ears of all are eagerly following the interminable legends of their race, as presented in the entrancing guise of a Burmese "pwe." The appearance of the crescent moon above the sky-line of the jungle may have given the signal for the drama to begin. Hour after hour the plot unfolds itself, its grim tragedy lightened at times by comic interludes that are grimmer still. The climax is reached at length as the curtain of the tropic night is lifted by the fingers of the dawn. When this moment arrives the strolling players begin to collect the

materials of their craft, the musicians unhinge their tinkling instruments, and the audience melts away, to loll through a noontide of sunny indolence.

Such, in a word, is the story of Burma. To the Englishman it may be a drama; to the Burman it will ever be a "pwe." It is a play of strong passions, of absorbing human interest. But its indescribable charm is derived from the shifting effects of Nature's scenery no less than from the play and interplay of human action. Before, therefore, we embark upon the story, let us, briefly and hurriedly, survey the scene of it.

Ptolemy was right when he called the easternmost peninsula of Asia the Golden Chersonese. One of the greatest of modern Indian writers likened the Burma of twenty years ago to a seagull, with its breast resting upon the delta of the Irawadi, its left wing preened over the province of Arakan, and its right pinion covering the long coast-line of Tenasserim. The larger Burma of to-day might, perhaps, more aptly be described as a cornucopia, a horn of plenty. Not to strain the simile unduly, the narrow division which has its root in the heart of the Malay peninsula, and is bounded by the frontier hills of Siam as far as Martaban, may serve as the tubular handle of the horn. As it extends northward, it spreads out its trumpet mouth until at length it embraces

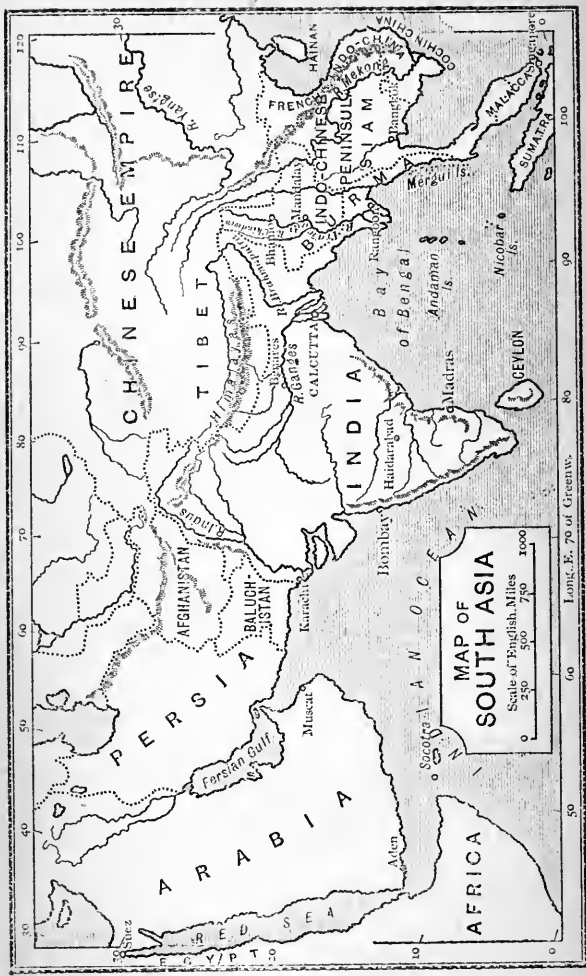
the wide convexity of frontier that stretches from the sacred basin of the Brahmaputra to the tangled glens of the Mekong.

The 88,000 square miles of Lower Burma give it an area exactly equal to that of Great Britain. The Annexation of 1886 added a new territory of the like extent, and the Shan States are half as large. Thus the present province of Burma, with its 210,000 square miles—the largest province within the Indian dominions of the King—is greater than all France, even with Corsica thrown in. Beginning in the far south, within ten degrees of the equator, it stretches to the north for 1,200 miles, and from east to west its breadth is half as great. Its coast-line includes the whole eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal, from Chittagong to the islets of the Mergui, and on the east and north a natural rampart of trackless hills protects it from the neighbour-lands of Siam, China, and Tibet. The artificial boundary which was set up half a century ago, when Upper Burma was marked off from the lower province by a parallel of latitude, was a makeshift that both nature and man refused to recognize. That the valley of the Irawadi should be one and indivisible was written of old in the book of destiny.

The keynote of Burmese scenery is incomparable variety. A voyage along the coast is an education in maritime geography. From

the estuary of the Naf, as far as the protuberant point of Cape Negrais, the seaward outline of Arakan is a crumple of black gneissic rocks, followed in the Bassein district by rugged walls of basalt, whose perils for the mariner are increased by the volcanic reefs that guard the scanty ports with sullen jealousy. At Negrais the coast makes the wide eastward sweep that carves out the Gulf of Martaban. Into one half of the bow there flows, through its fourteen mouths, the loam-laden water of the Irawadi, which embrowns the dark seas of the Bay of Bengal far away in the offing, almost to the shore of the Andamans themselves. Indeed, the output of the Irawadi is double that of the Nile, and ranks this Burmese river with the Volga or the Yangtse.

In the bight of the bay the Sittang broadens out into a formless estuary, into whose maw there penetrates a tidal wave, the sudden contraction of which turns it into an angry "bore" 20 feet in height, with the result that this stream becomes useless for purposes of navigation. The Salwin, the easternmost of the great streams by which Burma is scored into three longitudinal valleys, is also hopeless as a highway for man, because of its rocky rapids. Near the mouth of it the city of Maulmain, the earliest capital of the British dominion, nestles among charming mountain scenery that makes it one of the most romantic spots



MAP OF SOUTH ASIA

Scale of English Miles
0 250 500 750 1000

Long., E. 70 of Greenw. 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120

in the Golden East. The coast now loses the low mud-banks which are the normal attribute of a tropical delta, and stretches towards the equator in an unbroken monotony of mangrove swamp, whose interlaced roots form an impenetrable barrier to the voracity of the sea. Off the narrow neck of the peninsula the Mergui group introduces new conditions of scenery and climate. It is the haunt of an opulent pearl fishery; it may one day become one of the chief sources of the world's supply of india-rubber; the luscious edible bird's-nest is found in its resonant caves.

Leaving the seaboard, let us follow the course of the land frontier. In the north-west, from the Naf estuary to the *cul de sac* of the Patkai range, out of which the western arm of the Irawadi springs, Upper Burma is separated from Chittagong, Assam, and Manipur by a thousand miles of administrative boundary. The territory upon both sides of it being wholly British, this region offers no diplomatic problems. The Patkai is a spur of the Himalaya which trends towards the south, and is succeeded by the Manipur highlands and the Lushai hills, among which there are some peaks more than 10,000 feet high. The chain is continued by the massive backbone of the Arakan Yomas,* which serve as a watershed between the coast streamlets and the rivers

* Yoma = a ridge.

that feed the lower reaches of the Irawadi. The elevation decreases with each degree of latitude, and for the greater part of the Arakan division it does not average more than 4,000 feet. The Yomas sink at length to the sea-level at Negrais, and run beneath the waters of the bay to emerge once more in the wooded heights of the Andaman islands and the Nicobar group.

The head waters of the Irawadi, which the late Prince Henry of Orleans and his companion, M. Bonvalot—alone of modern travellers—claim to have explored, lie within the unknown vastness of Tibet. The mountainous wall, whose western slopes serve this mighty stream while its eastern slopes feed the still mightier Yangtse, becomes at this point a barrier erected by Nature between the two valleys, of which the one is now British, while the other is Chinese. The infrequent passes have ever formed the “gold and silver road” between the two empires, and although they are to-day guarded with ceaseless vigilance by the reactionary elements of the Mongol power the future lies with the optimists. The upland home of the scattered, inharmonious tribes which together form the tributary Shan States acts as a buffer territory between the British dominion in Upper Burma and the active agents of French colonial expansion, or the weak government of Upper Siam. There are

boundary problems along this whole region that are still unsolved, and the near future may witness further changes in the political map of the Chersonese.

The pathless Malayan mountains, whose long saw-like ridge forms the backbone of the isthmus of Kra, offer their western slope to Burma and the eastern to Siam. Varying in height from 3,000 to 5,000 feet, the British boundary approaches at one point to within a few miles of the Siamese gulf. Whether an isthmian canal at this point will in the future shorten the sea route from India to China need not at this stage be discussed. Let it suffice to say that this, the southernmost extremity of Burma, is the least populous, and is of moment to the empire mainly because of the timber and mineral wealth that still awaits the advent of the adventurer.

From the beginning until now the human story of Burma has been conditioned by the inevitable fact of climate. Along the seaboard the annual average rainfall often exceeds 200 inches—sevenfold that of England, two and a half times that of the West Indies, half as much again as that of Sierra Leone. Malicious wits declare that Maulmain prides itself upon having nearly three hundred rainy days per annum. In the delta the rainy season lasts for seven months, during which land travel is at a standstill, and a rainfall of 90 inches would be

deemed a poor one. Between Prome and Mandalay an arid tract of cotton land belts the lower valley, and sometimes experiences a rainfall of but 15 inches. But the cloud masses that sweep across it are arrested by the edge of the Shan plateau which towers over the Mandalay plain, with the result that its rainfall reaches a normal average of 46 inches, and gives it a climate not dissimilar in some aspects from that of south-west England. This is nearly doubled at Bhamo, which collects the moisture precipitated by the tangle of hills by which it is beset. On the Shan tableland, and in the narrow gorges of the Sittang and the Salwin, damper conditions prevail.

Yet, but for this precious gift of rain, Burma would never have been one of the rice granaries and one of the timber reserves of the world. These elements in its wealth will find a fitting place of their own in the story now to be told. It is in its vegetation that one must seek out the heart and secret of this enchanted land. The forests of Burma have a literature of their own. They are of many forms. Evergreen woods clothe the tropical region, from the mangrove swamps of the littoral to the dense forests of the plains, and the temperate forms by which the mountain slopes are clad. In other situations deciduous forests appear, running up from beach to hillside, and it is in these that you find teak, catch, pyinkado or

ironwood (*Xylia*), and eng., the lofty dipterocarp out of which the Burman fashions his perennial houseposts, his indestructible canoes. Even in the tideways there are willowy forests that attain a height of 50 feet; while on the swampy margins of the rivers the water-loving areca palm, and its boon companion the maranta, lift their tall stems like a flexible scaffolding that is bound together by an impenetrable tangle of orchid, jasmine, and polypody.

In the close tropical forests—to follow the classification worked out by Kurz—there may often be distinguished five separate strata, a veritable five-storied edifice of verdure. The foundations are of fern, bracken and asplenium, and many kinds of cone-head. Above these, ebonies are mingled with the pale rose flowers of several ironwoods, from whose slim stems hang festoons of rose-mallows and lianas, with here and there a jujube or a smilax. The third storey is formed of small evergreen trees, such as vitex, with palms, bamboos, screw pines, and the arborescent reed. Still higher than these, wingseeds and cedar-firs lift their heads, while over all the deciduous giants of the Orient, from their lofty pinnacles 250 feet above the ground, shed with every movement of the air a rain of leafage, whose decay provides the forest with perpetual nourishment.

In the heart of the jungle the English travel

ler finds himself at every turn confronted by novel forms of verdure. Yet the scenic aspect of a Burma forest is curiously homelike. Of the 4,250 flowering plants described in one flora, four-fifths are exogens—plants with sap and bark such as form the mainstay of an English landscape. There are moments—in the cool hour before the dawn, or in the instantaneous twilight—when a hillside glade reminds the exile of Windermere, when a river glen on the Upper Irawadi seems to recall the defiles of the Thames valley. The illusion is heightened by the twittering bird life—the stonechat and the kestrel, the pipit, the plover, and the wag-tail, some of which are winter visitants, and find their southern limit in Burma, while others are northward migrants from equatorial Malaya. The jungle fowl is everywhere, quail and partridge are abundant, the magpie fights with the hornbill, and there are many jays. At nightfall the Burmese peacock—fit emblem of the land—leaves his perch in the dark jungle by twos and threes, and preens his glittering plumage in the sight of man. The sandbanks on the river are often white with myriads of cranes. Duck, teal, and snipe are found in all the plains, and on the outskirts of the villages the dread vulture may be seen, while in the coast towns the Indian crow fills the air with its hoarse discords.

Of four-footed game there is a large variety,

from the clouded leopard and the tiger-cat to the civet, the badger, and the black bear of Malacca. The forests remote from man are haunted by gibbons and flying foxes, lemurs and insect-eating bats, while the night is often made hideous by the harsh baying of the jungle dog. The brow-antlered deer and the sambar are the aim and goal of many a shikar party. Over and above all the denizens of the jungle towers the lordly elephant, which at times descends in troops into the paddy fields, and ravages the crops. It is a sin for the pious disciple of the Buddha to take any life at all, and hence the animals of the province give little sign of decaying numbers. The rivers are crowded with fish, and when the Englishman first ascends the Irawadi he observes with astonishment the shoals of porpoises that gambol in the wake of the steamers as far north as Bhamo, 900 miles from the sea.

Burma is essentially a land of villages, and the river is its highway. Until the advent of the Briton there were no roads, except in the vicinity of the great pagodas. Tracks, it is true, were worn through the jungle by the bullock carts throughout the dry season, but from May to August they are navigable only by boat. Travel by such tortuous ruts is a penance, and indeed the cart roads of Burma are the finest switchbacks in the world. The vehicles are fashioned of a few bamboos loosely

knotted together, and the wheels are often mere sections of tree trunks, whose rugosities are rounded by continual use. The two exercises in which the Burman excels are the driving of a team of bullocks and the steering of a country boat. A cart race on a rutty road surpasses the classic excitements of the Colosseum ; a boat race, wherein a crew of twenty muscular youths paddle a canoe 60 feet in length at a furious speed, is one of the supreme moments of the social year. The boat population of the last census was 84,000, and during the rains boatmen navigate the swollen creeks with consummate skill in craft of 120 tons burthen. The houses are builded on piles, and during the monsoon rains the basement is submerged to a depth of many feet. When the water subsides the crops spring up with tropical haste, and the year's needs are supplied by the bounty of Nature for the brief trouble of the harvesting. At his door the peasant plucks the papaya and the mangosteen, the jack fruit and the plantain, not to speak of the durian, a fruit whose fragrance is that of a fetid sewer, yet a fruit whereof the Burmese monarchs received tribute for the royal table.

Such a people has few wants. The average Burman in the remoter districts could put his whole personalty upon his head, and migrate to another village at a moment's notice. Woman reigns supreme ; it is she who rules the house,

disposes of the crop, and carries on business in the bazaar. When the harvest is plentiful the overplus is spent in gaining merit for the next existence by lavish gifts to the shrine or the monastery. The Burman is a man of simple ambitions, innocent of the unrest of temperate regions where the struggle for mere being is more strenuous. This is the keynote of his story ; it is this that has made him acquiesce in British rule, not only with easy toleration, but with indolent contentment and supreme goodwill.

CHAPTER II

BURMA BEFORE THE BRITISH

THE story of Burma goes back into the far-off night of time. During the centuries wherein the Aryan invaders of northern India were peopling the valleys of the Ganges and the Indus, Mongoloid nomads were leaving their chilly home on the steppes of Central Asia. Following the courses of the Irawadi, the Salwin, and the Mekong, they made for themselves new homes in the sunnier lands of the Golden Chersonese. Here and there they encountered sparse tribes of a simpler and more savage race, men who had learned the spirit of the tropics in the crumpled mountain masses and the jungle-clad plains of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Mingling with these, they learned new habits of life, practised new forms

of nature-worship, and created new tribal races. Yet some of their primal northern customs survive to this day ; in the supreme moment of maternity the Burmese woman takes to her bed, and, enswathed in a heap of rugs, as if she were still in her ancestral home in Tartary, is smeared with oil, and heated with hot bricks.

For many ages the inherent clannishness of the nomad held these scattered races far apart. By the irony of fate it fell to the lot of the caste peoples of India to effect their fusion. Creeping up the basin of the Brahmaputra, across the passes that give ingress and egress to the hill country of Manipur, the high-born warrior caste of the Kshatriyas, whose mission it was to carry out the behests of the priestly Brahmins, entered the Irawadi valley, and brought with them the arts of civilized life. They taught the Mongoloid tribes how to spin, how to weave, how to grow cotton. Under the direction of Abhi Raja, a kinsman of Gaudama Buddha himself, they built a town at Tagaung—perhaps the Tugma of Ptolemy—and their terra-cotta bricks may be dug up in its ruins to this very day. Only in the sphere of religion did their influence fail. The Burmans have never known the Indian miseries of caste, of child marriage, of the seclusion of the zenana, of sati—the self-immolation of the widow on her husband's funeral pyre.

The Burmese woman owes her freedom to

the more wholesome ethics of Buddhism. The legend runs that in the third century before our era, when a Buddhist synod was convened at Pataliputra by Asoka, two missionary monks, Sono and Ottaro, were deputed to proceed to Pegu, the land of gold, in order to spread the faith of Gaudama. Unlike Judson, who, two thousand years after, introduced the Christian evangel by translating the New Testament into Burmese, these emissaries of the Lord Buddha left behind them a precious tradition of Gaudama's saintly laws, but no literature. It was not until the fifth century A.D.—a hundred years and more before Augustine came to England—that the monk Buddhaghosa crossed from Ceylon, and took to Thahton, on the coast of Martaban, copies of the Buddhist sacred books, and the more precious gift of an alphabet. From that time onwards local records, eked out by the splendid archives of the ancient Chinese writers, make Burmese history more and more complex, full, and dramatic.

At the beginning of our era the Shans, of whom more hereafter, were established on the Shweli river, the longest of the eastern tributaries of the Irawadi. Their king, Khullyi, began to reign in the year 80 A.D., and their dominion gradually spread southwards into the Irawadi region. Then, as now, they served the useful purpose of a buffer state between the

aggressive peoples of Western China and the leisure-loving Burmans of the lower plains, who in those days called themselves the Pyu. A Pyu chieftain founded a dynasty in the second century at Pagan, which was chosen centuries before by wanderers from South India because of its strategic value. For it lay in the fertile valley below the junction of the Chindwin and the Irawadi, and thus formed a natural meeting-place for the streams of migrant races which flowed into the peninsula from India on the one side and from China on the other.

For many a long year Pagan occupied an inconspicuous place in the politics of south-east Asia. But in 1010 A.D., when Ethelred the Unready was King of England, the throne of Burma was ascended by one Anawrata, who wrested Tenasserim from Siam, and abolished naga worship—the worship of deified serpents. During two hundred years his dynasty was perhaps the most brilliant that the land has ever known. Students flocked to Pagan from every part of the Buddhist East, masons were brought from India to erect its 9,999 pagodas, whose ruined domes and minarets remain to this day to attest its former splendour. It had a powerful court, a renowned literature, and it imbued the Burmese mind, in prince and peasant alike, with a religiosity that has coloured the daily life of the race from that day to this.

By the end of the thirteenth century the land was exhausted by reason of this prolonged passion for pagoda building. Its peaceful hierarchy lay ready to the hand of any vandal invader. Anawrata, it is true, had sent tribute of gold and silver vessels to his powerful neighbour in China, but the rise of the warrior power of Genghis Khan diverted for the time being the aggressive spirit of the northern Mongols. When at length Kublai Khan received from his brother, the ruler of Karakoram, the command of the Eastern armies, his first act made for him a name in military history. For he marched hot-foot a thousand miles across the steppes, from far-off Shensi into the heart of Yunnan, where he left a trusty lieutenant in charge, while he himself turned north again, and attacked the heart of the Mongol power.

This ambitious soldier sent envoys down the valley to Pagan, to demand tribute from the Burmese, as in the days of Anawrata. The envoys were decapitated. A Mongol army was at once assembled, and, pushing past the Burmese stockades at Bhamo, fought a pitched battle at Male, at the head of the long river defile, and made its way to Pagan. The splendid examples of Buddhist art were laid in ruins, and the runaway king was pursued as far as Tarok-hmaw—as we should say, Chinese Point—a spot in the delta which marks the

southernmost limit of all the Chinese invasions of Burma, before and after.

It was now the turn of the Siamese. They promptly resumed possession of Tenasserim, without which they had no means of contact with the trade of the Indian Ocean ; but in six years it was lost to them again. While three Shan brothers were engaged in establishing a new kingdom upon the ruins of the old Pagan power, an adventurer from Chiengmai (Zimme), one Magadu, crossed the Salwin from the east, and in 1287 founded a dynasty at Pegu, which lasted for 250 years. At first tributary to Siam, it gradually threw off the eastern yoke, and extended its own dominion northwards to Ava and westwards to Arakan. It was a conflict of race parallel with the conflict of the Saxon and the Dane, for Pegu was inhabited by the Talaing people, who had their own speech, their own literature, their own philosophical ideals, coloured not by the Aryan influx from the north but by the coming of the Dravidian peoples of South India over sea.

In 1540 the Talaing power was overthrown by the local governor of Taungngu, a town on the Sittang river, which in an earlier time was of greater importance, before the navigation of that stream was for ever destroyed by the formation of its destructive bore. Putting to death the king of Pegu, Bayinnaung—Next to the King—advanced to the siege of Martaban. Let

us linger for a moment upon the story, because it illustrates in a lurid fashion the methods by which native warfare in this restless peninsula has ever been sullied. The siege was a passive one, for the Burman is a Buddhist, not a Moslem, and has no wish to hurry himself into the next state of existence. The Portuguese had ships in the river and guns in the city. The beleaguered citizens were safe enough behind their teak stockades, their earthworks, and their brick defences. But the siege was ruthless, and after the people had been driven, by six months of starving, to eat their elephants, the ruler capitulated, expecting that life, at the least, would be granted to him and his family by the victor. The hope was short-lived. The queen and her four children were shamelessly hanged, feet upwards ; their fate was shared by 140 other women, and the king Soabinya himself, with a stone tied about his neck, was cast into the flood.

The victorious general, having beheaded his own master, Tabin, pursued his career of conquest. He was the Bonaparte of his age, and for thirty long years was a force to be reckoned with throughout the peninsula. He forbade the worship of "nats" or guardian spirits, and in the form of Branginoco his name dominates the Portuguese annals of the time. He alone, of all the rulers of Burma, endeavoured to bring foreigners within the pale of Buddhism

by force. In one of his campaigns, indeed, he was attended by a bodyguard of 400 Portuguese mercenaries whom he arrayed in military uniform. Two years after the sack of Martaban he endeavoured, but in vain, to add Siam to the Burmese empire. At the end of his reign he formed an arrogant resolve to quell the rebellious spirit that ran riot along the Arakan littoral. A fleet of 1,500 war galleys was sent out of the deltaic streams along the coast to Sandoway. Here the troops were disembarked in order to prepare for their march upon Arakan. But the spirit of the aged warrior failed him, and he took to his bed and passed away in his stockaded palace at Pegu, in the zenith of his glory. His son, Yewa Raja, the spiritless scion of a domineering soldier of fortune, permitted the kingdom to be broken up, and the alliance of Pegu and Burma was, for the time being, brought to an end.

All this time, through the mouths of intrepid travellers, strange tales of the savage magnificence of the Indo-Chinese peninsula were filtering into Western Europe, and exciting the cupidity of mediæval commerce. Whether Ser Marco Polo, who for a term was in the service of Kublai Khan, followed in the train of the victorious raiders who overthrew the might of the Pagan empire, history is silent. Perhaps he did. But already in 1430 di Conti, a Venetian merchant, saw the white elephant in the royal palace at Ava ; forty

years later the Muscovite Nikitin found Indian rivals forestalling him in his efforts to secure a trade with Pegu. In 1496 two Genoese adventurers called Hieronimo, while at Ava, learned of the existence of huge rubies, such as no Mediterranean jeweller had ever seen; and a few years after, as Hakluyt records, a Roman, one Varthema, encountered a colony of Nestorian Christians at Pegu. Twenty years after the Cape of Good Hope first was rounded by Vasco di Gama, the Portuguese negotiated a treaty whereby they were permitted to erect a factory at Martaban, and in 1545 Ferdinand Pinto, that maligned romancer, arrived in the bay. Later still, while at home the Armada was arming, the English traveller Fitch was for the first time in our history gazing upon the glories of the Shwe Dagon, the Golden Pagoda of Rangoon.

The tide of empire ebbed and flowed, and by the end of the sixteenth century the Talings were again subject to the Burmese power of Ava. This kingdom lasted until 1740, when for a dozen restless years the southern race threw off the yoke. They chanced to leave in charge of the conquered village of Shwebo (fifty miles north of Mandalay) a peasant-born hunter, Alaungpaya by name, who determined to revive the Burmese majesty once more in his own person. Aided at first by the prestige of small successes, for he had

but a hundred followers, it was not long before he advanced and seized the capital, whence he waged a pitiless warfare against the Peguans. As a last resort they cooped themselves up in the fortress of Syriam, below the town of Rangoon, and there one day they were captured by surprise. The splendid Talaing literature was consigned to the flames, the flexible Talaing tongue was almost stamped out of the land. The Peguan power was broken for ever.

Alaungpaya—or Alompra,* to give him his older name—thus became, in 1755, the founder of the final dynasty of native rulers. He consolidated his kingdom by reducing to submission Pegu, Tavoy, Mergui, and Tenasserim. But for a sudden illness, which carried him off while still in the field, he might have secured Siam as well. Of the three brothers of his who succeeded to the throne, Sinbyushin—Lord of the White Elephant—may be mentioned, not only because he added Manipur and Cachar to his dominions, and seized the capital of Siam, but also because he resisted a prolonged inroad on the part of China, which at last resulted in a crushing defeat of that northern power. Against the advice of his generals, who counselled no quarter, he determined to heal up the wound and to preserve

* The Burmese have the same trouble with their *r*'s as other Mongoloid races. In the spelling of Burmese names *r* and *y* are virtually interchangeable.

the "gold and silver road" of commerce between the two empires. It was agreed by a treaty at Bhamo that every ten years ambassadors with friendly gifts should be sent by each monarch to the other, in order to emphasize their agreeable relations. Of these decennial missions we shall hear more later on.

It fell to the lot of this monarch's younger brother Bodawpaya, in 1784, to add Arakan to the empire, and so to complete the Burma of modern times. It was he who determined to remove the capital from Ava, where it had been established for four hundred years, to a new site on the north of it, called Amarapura. It was he also who first came into conflict with the power of Britain, before whose fiat the Burmese empire was destined to crumble to its fall.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONS WITH JOHN COMPANY

I HAVE said that in 1587 Ralph Fitch, an English commercial traveller, chanced to find himself in the entrancing kingdom of Pegu. It was the hey-day of the Burmese renaissance. The country was prosperous, and its foreign trade was growing by leaps and bounds. This "marchant of London" saw a land covered with a plenitude of rice-fields, was astonished to learn that wheat was never raised, observed the fact that the people refused to milk their "buffles," was told that the pagodas were regilded every dozen years, waxed eloquent over the yellow robes and palm fans of the monks, and described tattooing as a royal privilege. He heard of, if he did not see, the four white elephants belonging to the king, and

learned that the local brokers charged 2 per cent. commission for the sale of merchandise. When he crossed the Pegu ridges to Chiengmai, he found himself on the track of the ancient caravan routes, along which "come many merchants out of China, and bring great store of mastic, gold, silver, and many other things of China work."

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Portuguese obtained from the king of Pegu a treaty under which they opened factories at Martaban, and also at Syriam, an ancient township that lay within eyeshot of the Golden Pagoda. By the end of the century the Dutch were installed on the tiny islet of Negrais, which, like a lonely vedette, stands sentinel over the Bay of Bengal. In the year 1600 our own "Honourable East India Company" was formed, and within a dozen years of its birth its agents were already to be encountered side by side with those of Holland at Syriam, Prome, Ava, and perhaps even at Bhamo, 900 miles to the north. Let it be noted that from the very beginning, while their Portuguese rivals clung to the facile security of the coast, the English and Dutch adventurers penetrated into the heart of the land. They were not slow to perceive that the key to empire lay in the mighty Irawadi stream.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch found themselves involved in a conflict with the governor of Pegu, at whose instigation

the whole European community was expelled from the land. The British, it is true, remained at Mergui, the pearling station which lay on the way to Singapore, but that coast was at the time in the occupation of Siam. These traders were expelled in 1687 at the bidding of "John Company," and in the scuffle that ensued seventeen British subjects lost their lives. In 1680 a trader of Ava was instructed by the British authorities of Fort St. George (Madras) to seek sanction for a settlement at Bhamo, but this was refused. In 1688, however, the governor of Syriam began to realize the loss to the empire caused by the lack of British trade, and an appeal was accordingly sent to the governor of Fort St. George, inviting merchants to take up their residence in Pegu once more. The response came a few years after, when Mr. Fleetwood obtained from the King of Ava a grant for the erection of a factory at Syriam, as well as at Negrais and Bassein, thereby controlling the trade of the delta. During the Talaing rebellion, which put an end for the time being to the power of Ava, the English resident was withdrawn. But the merchants remained, and found themselves subjected to the ceaseless rivalry of the French, who also had a station at Syriam. It was the age when Dupleix, the governor of Pondicherry, was dreaming of a French dominion in the East, and as soon as Alaungpaya began to overcome

the rebel power of the Peguans, Dupleix sent a couple of ships to their aid. The master of one of them was cajoled up the river by the wily conqueror, and his crew, except a few captive lascars, were slaughtered to a man. The French colony in Syriam met the same fate.

All this time the Honourable East India Company was striving through its agents to secure advantageous terms of alliance with the new dynasty. In 1755, the year in which Alaungpaya assumed the crown, Captain Baker, the master of an East Indiaman, went up to Ava with a few chests of gunpowder, a couple of muskets, a gilt looking-glass, a little lavender water, and some red earth in bags. Disposing of these presents the gallant mariner offered the friendship of the British power. "Captain," cried the warrior-king, "see this sword. It is now three years since it has been constantly exercised in chastising my enemies. It is now almost bent with use, but it shall be continued to the same till they are utterly dispersed. Don't talk of assistance ; I need none." Yet two years later the young self-made potentate addressed a letter to George III, written on virgin gold and studded with rubies. Though the letter never reached its goal a young ensign was sent to meet Alaungpaya, and after many delays found him upon a royal galley on the Irawadi. He brought away with him a perpetual cession of the island of Negrais, a grant of trading land at

Bassein, and in return for his own substantial presents received twenty-four maize ears, eighteen oranges, and five cucumbers. The king retained young Lester's boat, and gave him in exchange a rotten craft which sank during the perilous voyage down the stream.

It was not long before the greed of certain members of the trading community led them to commit the incredible folly of supplying munitions of war to the rebels who were still in the field. A French adventurer, smarting under the indignities suffered by his compatriots, was not slow to acquaint Alaungpaya with the circumstance, and the English merchants shared the dismal fate of their Gallic rivals. It was not until his successor Naungdawgyi came to the throne that the British were permitted once again to reopen their factory at Bassein.

As the century neared its close the Burmese empire, enlarged by the energy and prowess of the peasant-born Alaungpaya and his brothers, reached the zenith of its renown. It was the most powerful monarchy in all Asia, and its rulers began to dream dreams of a conquest of Bengal, if not of the whole Indian peninsula. The absorption of the maritime kingdom of Arakan by Bodawpaya, the youngest of Alaungpaya's brothers, was destined to be provocative of much.

Some of the vanquished Rakhaings, unwilling to bear the Burman yoke, fled over the

British frontier into Chittagong, and from this convenient base carried on raiding operations into their native land. One cannot blame the Burmese prince for the presumption that his might was equal to the task of bringing Britain to book. He was the ruler of a realm that stretched from Tenasserim, far away in the tropic south, through Mergui, Tavoy, Pegu, Ava, and Arakan into the Shan States and Mogaung, and even into Assam, Manipur, and Cachar—a realm, too, that embraced a seaboard of 1,200 miles. Such a man, who indeed announced himself to be the fifth Buddha, may be excused the Oriental insolence by which his statecraft was coloured. He demanded of the Government of Bengal the extradition of his fugitives, and permitted 5,000 of his troops to invade British territory in pursuit of them. His confidence was not misplaced; Sir John Shore complied with the request, and the fugitives were surrendered. This, the first international incident in Anglo-Burmese history, occurred in 1795. At the same time a formal embassy was despatched to the court of Ava, under the direction of Captain Michael Symes, who remained in the country for five years. Other missions, mostly under the leadership of Captain Canning, followed during the next decade.

But the relations of the Burmese with John Company were marked, as indeed they con-

tinued to be, by an enmity none the less real because it was half veiled by the contemptuous tolerance with which the English traders were treated by the local governors. Under Shore's successor in the Governor-Generalship, Lord Wellesley, Arakanese fugitives continued their dacoities,* and the forays of one Chin Byan led to another of Canning's missions to Rangoon. But Wellesley was made of sterner stuff, and when the restitution of the men who had sought an asylum on British soil was demanded of him, he curtly declined.

For a quarter of a century the Burmese court pursued with impunity its irritant policy. In 1817—despite Seringapatam, despite even Assaye, upon whose bloodier field 12,000 Mahrattas fell before the scythe of the Iron Duke—Burma tried to intrigue against the English with the court of Lahore, and sought the cooperation of the Mahrattas. In the following year the governor of Ramri, an island of no moment midway between Bassein and Akyab, impudently demanded the cession of Chittagong, Dacca, and Murshidabad. The Burmese troops raided Eastern Bengal, and hauled down the British flag that floated over an eyot in the Brahmaputra. Elephant parties engaged upon peaceable duties in the Chittagong hills were seized and held to ransom.

In 1819 the accession of Bodawpaya's grand-

* See Chapter VIII.

son Bagyidaw brought matters to a head. This young monarch was encouraged in his defiant policy by his queen Menu, a tempestuous spirit who was known to her generation as the Sorceress. Goaded by this woman, Bagyidaw heaped insults upon the British power, sent his general, the Maha Bandula, into Bengal, oppressed the trading colony, and permitted English prisoners to be tortured at the will of the gaolers. In 1823 the island of Shapuri, situate at the mouth of the Naf, the estuarine frontier between the two empires, was wantonly attacked, and our sepoys killed and wounded. A Chittagong pilot was treacherously seized, and sent under guard to Ava.

It was the last straw. Lord Amherst's patient remonstrances were treated with disdain, and on the 5th of March, 1824, war was at length declared. The Governor-General determined to carry the British arms to the enemy's capital, which by this time was re-established at Ava. On the 10th of May Sir Archibald Campbell reached Rangoon with a small mixed force of English and sepoys, numbering 11,500 officers and men. They included two companies of artillery and a company of pioneers. On the day after his arrival the general went ashore with 6,000 men, and found himself in possession of a deserted town. His troops were quartered upon the shrine-laden platform of the Shwe Dagon, above whose glittering cone the British

ensign fluttered in the monsoon wind. Rangoon, then as now, was the rice granary of the empire, but its cereal wealth was ruthlessly destroyed by the Burmans before they retired into the out-post villages, by means of whose stockaded defences they sought to hem in the invader. It was not long before the commander of the expedition realized how ill-prepared he was to cope with the conditions of Burmese warfare, concerning which the Company's intelligence officers displayed a lamentable ignorance. Precarious supplies arrived from Calcutta and Madras, but fresh food was bad and scanty, the biscuit was mouldy, the meat putrescent, and the sickness that broke out in the British ranks as the rainy season advanced was pitiful in the extreme.

For several weeks attempts were made to break up the palisades by which the town was surrounded. The first of these affairs, sometimes dignified with the name of the battle of Zwegyon, was the first regular engagement in which the British and the Burmese forces met. The wet monsoon had already begun, and it was therefore hopeless to think of keeping the powder dry. It thus became a bayonet action, and for the first time in his history of two thousand years the Burman learned the meaning of cold steel. Four hundred of the enemy lay dead upon the field. The stockades were usually formed of a 4-foot parapet of teak

piles, banked up with the earth taken out of a 3-foot trench. The interstices of the stockade were protected by huge mats, and it was against these defences, always formidable to an Oriental invader, that our men hurled themselves again and again. One of the strongest stockades protected the village of Kemmendine on the river bank, a village whose name—with the perversity of his kind—was presently corrupted by the English soldier into “Come an’ dine,” just as another, Pazundaung, was known to him as “Push ’em down.” On the 10th of June the Kemmendine stockades were battered by our artillery, and the defenders fled in dismay.

The ships, anchored in midstream, encountered their deadliest peril from an ingenious device of the enemy, who built bamboo rafts 100 feet in length, hinged together after the fashion of huge dragons. Between the bamboos long rows of earthenware pots were slung, filled with cotton, oil, and gunpowder, and after being ignited these formidable engines of destruction were cast adrift. But the naval officers were equal to the emergency, and by anchoring a chain of booms upstream they diverted the fire rafts to the opposite bank.

Broken down by sickness, the invaders continued to suffer the rigours of the rainy season. The Irawadi was in flood, the delta was submerged, and there was no hope of a further

advance for many months. During this period of enforced inaction General Campbell sent the greater part of his force down the coast, where, under healthier conditions, they were not long in achieving important successes. Syriam was captured in August, and during the next three months Tavoy, Mergui, Tenasserim, and Pegu were taken in succession.

As soon as the rains were over, the Bandula, who was attempting to invade Bengal, marched in hot haste across Arakan and assembled around Rangoon an army which, in the manner of the East, was said to number 60,000 men. The Bandula was a resolute soldier, who might have achieved renown in a conflict with an Oriental army. A pitiless martinet, he ordered a disobedient officer to be sawn asunder in his presence. The incident, like the following one, was in accord with the spirit of the age. When the Burmese re-crossed our frontier they loaded up their prisoners with the booty collected in the villages on the British side. Inasmuch as the women with children at the breast were unable in such a plight to carry their proper share, the heads of the children were struck off and tumbled into the stream. But it was the fate alike of the Bandula and of his master to be pitted against the majesty of Britain. Early in December his huge rabble was routed, and our troops proceeded up the river on the way to Ava. The Bandula made another stand at

Donabyu, but on April 2nd Sir Archibald Campbell carried the stockade, and the death of the enemy's commander from the bursting of a shell was a blow from which there was no recovery.

The summer was spent by a British force of 5,000 men at Prome, while elsewhere a second army of 11,000 men under General Morrison overran Arakan, and seized the passes over the hills into the Irawadi valley. Still another drove the Burmese out of Assam and advanced into Cachar. At the end of the rains a native force, again computed at 60,000 men, repeated at Prome the tactics which the year before failed them at Rangoon. In December Campbell dispersed them in detail, advanced to the north, and broke up the positions in which they attempted to arrest his progress. On the 9th of February, 1826, the fugitive army was finally overthrown at Pagan, whose splendid memories failed to inspire victory in this hour of need.

In a few days, lest the conqueror should desecrate with his vandal foot the sacred soil of Ava, he was met at Yandabu by an American missionary, who was released from an inglorious imprisonment in order to convey to the British general a treaty, the sincerity of which was attested by a deposit of 25 lakhs.* This treaty of Yandabu, which was ratified on February 24th, abandoned the claim of the

* See footnote on following page.

Burmese empire to Assam and Cachar ; it ceded to the British³ the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim ; it undertook to pay an indemnity of a crore of rupees, of which the sum tendered there and then was the first instalment of one-fourth. At the end of 1827, when the second instalment was paid, the British retired from Rangoon, and—ever moderate in victory—restored the Irawadi valley in its integrity to the Burmese.

* The unit of the currency of India since the sixteenth century has been the rupee. At first it reached a value of 2s. 9d., as is recorded by " Purchas his Pilgrimes," but at the beginning of the nineteenth century it had a nominal value of 2s. Since that time it has fallen, and at one time reached an exchange value of 1s., but for several years has been stable at 1s. 4d. Rs. 100,000 = 1 lakh ; 100 lakhs = 1 crore. Thus the indemnity paid to Britain after the first Burmese war was worth a million sterling ; to-day the same number of rupees would fetch only two-thirds of that sum in gold.

CHAPTER IV

THE ACQUISITION OF RANGOON

THUS, at a cost in treasure variously estimated at £5,000,000 to £10,000,000, and a sacrifice of 4,000 men, mostly from disease, John Company added to his burdens the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal, from the estuary of the Naf to the archipelago of Mergui, broken only by the broad sea-base of the delta from Bassein to Martaban, which the conqueror restored to his beaten foe. Mongol to the marrow, the monarch sought to "save face" by putting his own interpretation upon the treaty which freed him of the hated invader. To the Burmese people the event was thus described. The strangers, having spent vast sums of money upon their expedition to Ava, found their resources exhausted by the time they reached Yandabu. In great distress they

petitioned the king, who of his clemency sent them large sums of money to pay their expenses back again, and ordered them out of the country.

For several years both parties to the struggle were content to observe the main provisions of the Yandabu settlement. In 1830 Major Burney, after a visit paid by Captain Crawford three years before, was sent to the court of Ava. In compliance with the right conferred upon the victors, under a commercial treaty subsequently signed, he was instructed to establish a residency in the Burmese capital. His task was a weary one, for the amenities of Western diplomacy were unknown to the native ministers, and when Bagyidaw lost his reason the patience of the resident reached the point of despair.

At this crisis, in the year marked at home by the death of the English King William IV, the Burmese king's brother Tharawadi retired to Shwebo, the birthplace of the Alompra dynasty, and with a small following advanced upon the capital. Here he dethroned Bagyidaw, and began his reign after the manner of his race by putting to death his enemies, including, of necessity, the ministers of his brother's court. The old sorceress queen was defiant, but paid the penalty with her life. While one executioner forced her head back upon the neck until the bone of the throat—the

thyroid cartilage—was exposed, another struck it smartly with a heavy bamboo rod, and in a moment, painlessly, bloodlessly, all was over. Her son and brother shared her fate.

Tharawadi, thus secured upon the peacock throne, was not long in showing his dislike to Colonel Burney. This officer was unwilling that the prestige of the young English maiden just called to the throne of Britain should suffer from the studied insolence of a sullen despot. He therefore withdrew, broken-hearted at the ill-success of his mission. In the following year another resident was sent by the Governor-General to fill his place, but after endeavouring vainly for six months to secure an audience of the king he too gave up the task. He left behind him an assistant who stuck to his post for a couple of years and then also retired. The removal of the moral restraint exercised by the representative of British might was the signal for an outbreak of more active dislike. Tharawadi cherished the ambition to carry war against the British into their own territory, and went down to Rangoon with the object of making preparations. This project was abandoned ; but British ships were outraged, a British ship-owner was maltreated, and to all remonstrances on the part of the Government of Calcutta the king turned a deaf ear. He, like his brother, became insane, and had to be kept in confinement by his ministers, lest worse

mischief should ensue. In his later years he used to spear his courtiers out of sheer wantonness, until at length the patience of his *entourage* was exhausted, and he was smothered in his bed.

The same policy of defiant ill-will was persisted in by his wayward, tyrannical son, Pagan Min,* who attained to power in 1846, and removed the capital once more from Amarapura to Ava, as in the days of his uncle Bagyidaw. He met all demands for redress with unreasoning obduracy. A man of low pursuits, his days were spent in cock-fighting and gambling, and he permitted his will to be bent this way and that by a gang of sycophants who administered to his lecheries. These evils at length aroused the ire of the ease-loving Burmans themselves, and a rebellion was threatened, at the instigation of a Mohammedan, one Maung Bhe, who, however, soon fell into the hands of the monarch, and lost his head.

In 1851 a deputation of Rangoon merchants waited upon Lord Dalhousie in Calcutta, and claimed the protection and support of the Government. Commodore Lambert was accordingly sent to Rangoon in H.M.S. "Fox," with instructions to investigate their complaints, and to address a letter to the Burmese king. He found that the governor of Ran-

* Min = a prince.

goon had put the captain of a British merchantman in the stocks, with a threat to keep him there until a fine of Rs. 900 was paid. Another shipmaster was treated similarly. Lambert demanded the payment of compensation to the mariners, and the removal of the governor, as a practical apology to the English Government. The latter demand was complied with, but the new governor was even more sullen in his hatred of the foreigners. When the commodore sought an audience, and landed some of his officers for the purpose, they were left outside the gate in the hot sun, amid the insolent jeers of the governor and his myrmidons. Lambert thereupon took possession of one of the king's war-boats, and informed the executive that it would be restored upon payment of Rs. 10,000. The Burmese responded by opening fire from their stockades, but these were promptly demolished by the guns of the "Fox," and the Burmese ports were declared to be in a state of blockade. The commodore now set sail for Calcutta in order to report progress. Lord Dalhousie expressed approval of the measures already taken, and made fresh efforts to secure a settlement by peaceable negotiations. But this was not to be. In February, 1852, formal declaration of war was threatened unless full satisfaction was given by the 1st of April. In thus timing the commencement of the operations at the opening of the monsoon

rains, the lesson of the earlier war was completely ignored. A landing party of 5,800 men was sent to Rangoon, under the command of General Godwin, together with nineteen steamships and a force of 2,300 bluejackets and marines, who were placed at the disposal of the commodore.

On April 2nd, the day after the expiry of the date in the ultimatum, the British arrived. In view of its proximity to our then capital at Maulmain, Godwin determined to strike the first blow at Martaban. As soon as the ships arrived a heavy cannonade was opened upon the stockades run up by the Burmese—stockades that differed in no particular from those by which the town was defended three centuries before, in the old days of Bayinnaung. But the long-drawn story of that siege was not destined to be repeated, for in a few minutes the stockades were as though they had never been, and Martaban was in our hands. This was on the 12th. Two days later a landing was effected at Rangoon. On the 14th, the three terraces of the Shwe Dagon, which had been fortified since the earlier campaign, were taken by storm, and the British ensign once more floated over the golden spire. In the following month Bassein was captured, for the second time in its history. The condition of the troops during the rains was immensely improved, and the blunders of the earlier campaign were not repeated. Three

thousand head of cattle were collected at Maulmain, and sixty portable thatched houses were sent over to Rangoon as summer barracks. On July 27th Lord Dalhousie paid a flying visit to Rangoon, held a levée, and made a flattering proclamation to the troops, returning to Calcutta four days after. When operations in the field began again, at the end of the rains, Prome was taken in October, and by this time the chief towns of Lower Burma were in our hands.

The object of the British being limited to the task of teaching the Burmese a sufficient lesson, no further conquest was desired, and the Governor-General accordingly arrived once more in Rangoon. He made a proclamation on December 20th, declaring that the province of Pegu, then in the occupation of the British troops, would henceforth be a portion of the British territories in the East. The people were called upon "to submit to the authority of the British Government, whose power they had seen to be irresistible, and whose rule was marked by justice and beneficence." Two days later Lord Dalhousie placed in position, six miles north of Myede, the two white pillars that lay upon the parallel of latitude* which was henceforth to serve as the boundary between the two empires.

In Upper Burma the rage of the people at the loss of the rich province of Pegu turned against Pagan Min, whose stubbornness it was that had brought the British for a second time

* 19° 30' N. lat.

to their shores. They accordingly took from his monastery a half-brother of his, the Mindon prince, with the intention of giving him the throne. Suspected of these designs by the monarch, he fled to Shwebo, which once more became, as in the days of Alaungpaya and of Tharawadi, the birthplace of a kingdom. For some time, indeed, he held at this town an independent court, but it was not long before he went down the river to Amarapura, and assumed the reins of power. Pagan Min was thrown into prison, being contemptuously left to the sordid enjoyments of his mains of cocks, and at the end of the year the new king was crowned.

This first year of the occupation of Lower Burma, however, was not destined to pass by without a resumption of military operations. Some patriot Talaings assembled themselves under the banner of a dacoit chief, one Myat Hton, who entrenched himself in the stronghold of Donabyu, which, as we have seen, was the scene of a stirring conflict in the earlier war. The first attack upon the stockade met with no success, but on March 19th the attack was renewed, and an incident of the day may be recalled, because it served as the baptism of fire of a young ensign who was destined, half a century after, to hold the command-in-chief of the British army. A storming party was led by this subaltern, who was still in his teens, and as

he approached the enemy's breastworks he felt himself slipping into a covered pit, whose floor was studded with sharp stakes. After a perilous quarter of an hour he was able to rejoin his detachment, and volunteered to lead a second party in the advance. While racing for the honour of first entry he was laid low by a jingal ball, which tore open the muscle of the thigh, and for many months his life hung upon a thread. But he at length recovered, and in the following year, in all the bravery of his first medal, was fighting gaily in the Crimea. Of such stuff was Garnet Wolseley made.

The charge of the new province of Pegu was given to Major Arthur Phayre; Captain Fytche, who was destined to succeed him, being his assistant. Mindon Min, like his predecessor, refused to acknowledge the cession of Pegu by any formal treaty, although he was astute enough to avoid active measures of hostility. At the end of 1854 he despatched an embassy to Calcutta, and when it was received by Lord Dalhousie, Major Phayre being with them as interpreter, the first request of the chief envoy was for the restitution of the conquered province. "Tell them," replied the great consul to the interpreter, "that as long as that sun shines in the heavens, so long shall the British flag wave over those possessions."

This diplomatic mission was followed, in the August of the next year, by an embassy to Ava

under the leadership of the new Commissioner. He was accompanied by Captain Yule as secretary, and by Mr. Oldham as geologist, and an immense mass of information was quietly put together during the successive stages of the journey. The geologist was denied access to the far-famed ruby mines, but Mindon Min was not unfriendly, although he resolutely declined to put his name to a commercial treaty. The relations between the two Burmas were at this stage when, in the autumn of 1858, a few months after Mindon founded a new capital at Mandalay, the political power of John Company came to an end, and the British sovereign was proclaimed Queen throughout the length and breadth of her Indian dominions.

CHAPTER V

THE RIVAL BURMAS

ONE of the earliest tasks to which the new Commissioner addressed himself was that of pacifying the new province. For several years after the acquisition of Pegu dacoity was rife throughout the delta. The rebels comprised not only those who were dissatisfied with the new *régime*, but also the large bands of soldiery whose occupation was gone with the loss of the Burmese dominion. The guerilla warfare led by Myat Hton set an example that was followed in other parts of the province, and the disturbance in the sources of sustenance would have driven large bodies of restless Burmans to starvation but for the promptitude with which Major Phayre devised public works. By this means he was able to use their labour in payment for the sums expended

upon food-relief, which in any event the Government would have had to disburse. No less than 25,000 to 30,000 men were employed in this way, and the benefit of their work was permanent.

In 1862 the territories wrested from the Burmese power — Arakan, Tenasserim, and Pegu—were united into the province of British Burma, and the government was entrusted to the firm, capable hands of Arthur Phayre, who by this time had reached his lieutenant-colonelcy, and was now styled the Chief Commissioner of the united province. Undeterred by the ill-success of his mission to Ava in 1855, he seized the opportunity afforded by his elevation to the more responsible rank for setting out once more upon a treaty-making visit to the Burmese capital. Although the fuller treaty of commerce between the two powers which was earnestly desired by one of them was again resisted by the other, Colonel Phayre was able to register a small success. The king agreed to a mutual reduction of the frontier duties—the British at the expiration of one year, the Burmese at the end of four—he admitted the right of British subjects to carry on trade in either of the Burmas, and consented to the presence in his capital of a resident representative of the British Government. But the trade interests of the English colony were too important to be left in the uncertainty that would always exist if no

legal sanction were given to them. The British complied with their bargain, but the Burmese diligently exacted their frontier imposts. In 1866, accordingly, another attempt was made to secure a commercial treaty—again without avail. Yet Mindon Min did not scruple to utilize the services of the British when his crown was threatened by a rebellion instigated by his own sons. In the August of 1866, while the hlotdaw, the council of the realm, was in session, the Myingon prince and the Myingondaing prince burst in upon them with a band of thirty desperate followers. This spirited attempt to dethrone their father caused the death of the war minister, and almost cost Mindon his own life. But the British intervened in the interest of law and order, and the princely rebels, who surrendered while living in British territory, were for a time kept in confinement—in the province itself, and were ultimately deported to India. One episode of this abortive plot to overturn the monarchy should be chronicled here. Captain Edward Sladen happened to be present in the summer palace when the outbreak occurred, and for an hour his life was in peril, before he reached once more the sanctuary of the British residency. In the course of the following week he went down to Rangoon; twenty years after he was destined to return.

In the following year, 1867, Colonel Phayre,

whose well-earned knighthood was a recognition of a lifetime spent in the public service, retired and made way for the accession to power of his old comrade, Albert Fytche, in whose name it is not difficult to trace his descent from the Ralph Fitch who was in Rangoon three centuries before. As deputy commissioner of the Bassein district he was already versed in the special needs of the deltaic region. It was, therefore, with a strong determination to carry his point that he went up to Mandalay in October. He came away with a treaty, signed by Mindon Min, in his pocket. This was ratified by Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy of India, before the end of November. Retaining in full force the provisions of the treaty secured by his predecessor five years before, Colonel Fytche arranged a 5 per cent. *ad valorem* duty upon all merchandise that crossed the frontier, gave permission to the Burmese Government to raise the tariff after the first ten years up to a maximum of 10 per cent., and agreed that, so long as the rate at which the duties collected by the Burmese did not exceed 5 per cent., the British on their part would adhere to the abolition of the frontier Customs duty. Earth oil, timber, and precious stones were recognized as royal monopolies, there was to be free trade in gold and silver bullion, and the Burmese Government were expected to abstain from creating monopolies in other commodities.

The resident agent in the Burmese capital was to have final jurisdiction in all civil suits between British subjects, and the mutual extradition of criminals charged with certain offences was conceded on both sides.

For the next twelve years the rival Burmas continued to tread the path of destiny. Had the conditions of the treaty of 1867 been loyally observed by the Oriental monarch, the British colony in Lower Burma would have been content to live and let live. But the convention was allowed to lapse at the end of the first ten years, and it was never renewed.

Each administration had its anxieties to surmount. In 1868 a man called Nga Kyaw Tha attempted to seize the Bassein treasury, and to raise a rebellion. The watchful deputy commissioner proceeded to the scene of the disturbance with a few policemen, and it was quelled in a moment. So also in 1870 an abortive attempt was made to overturn the monarchy by the Katha prince, another of the king's interminable brood. But Mindon Min was equal to the occasion, and played his wits against those of his son and the mother who bore him so ungrateful a child. And when, in the following year, the superstitious Convener of the Fifth Great Synod sent down to Rangoon a golden umbrella, valued at $6\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, to be erected over the glittering dome of the Shwe Dagon, Mindon doubtless deemed his power to

be in the ascendant. It was the beginning of the lustrum of Ashley Eden, he who, seven years before, as an envoy to the court of Bhotan, was seized and compelled, on pain of death, to sign away our patrimony in Assam. Mindon Min knew of the episode, and thought himself safe in his inland palace, for he suddenly changed his tune and began to grant monopolies to all and sundry for every important article of produce in the realm.

During the summer of 1872 a Burmese embassy, for the first time in history, landed on the shores of England. The event was a direct slap in the face for the Indian Government, because it was an intimation that the king claimed the privilege of approaching Britain as a sovereign power. The Kinwun Mingyi (the foreign secretary) and his companions were received at Windsor Castle by the Great White Queen, to whom he delivered a letter from his royal master, accompanied by a casket filled with Oriental gauds. During its stay of two months in London the embassy was received by the Prince of Wales and the Lord Mayor; it attended a levée, a State ball and concert, and a garden party. And men began to hope that at length friendlier relations were to be established between the British power in Asia and the "Lord of the Rising Sun." Yet before the end of the year Italian engineers and other sources of influence inimical to Britain

appeared upon the scene. During these years of rivalry both Eden and Rivers Thompson, who came from the secretariat of the Bengal Government to succeed him, contrived to maintain the outward semblance of amity between the two Burmas. But when, in 1878, Mindon Min lay upon his deathbed, the outlook was big with portent, and there rested upon the horizon thick clouds that presaged the coming storm.

Here let us pause for a moment in order to consider what manner of man it was who for a quarter of a century wielded the sceptre of Burma, a Burma shorn of its rich appanages on the coast, and cut off by Dalhousie's irremovable pillars from its natural outlet in the lower valley of the Irawadi. What sort of constitution bound him? What ministry counselled him? What was his court, his *entourage*? The Burmese monarch, then as always, was a despot amenable to no restraint but that of public opinion, and this had no power of making itself heard except by insurrection. In theory the whole populace were the slaves of the king. Every man, at his sovereign will, was liable to serve the monarch as a soldier or a labourer. No one could cross the frontier except by a permit available only for a fixed period, and women might not leave the kingdom at all. The relatives of any man who was found to have settled in Lower Burma were

liable to be put to death. Yet side by side with this despotism there existed a system of local government, in district, town, and village, whose effect was democratic in the extreme.

Without caste, without a landed nobility, Burma was governed by a handful of State officers who in every instance were the tools of the king. The "hlotdaw" consisted of four wungyis (great officers), and their labours were directed in time of peace by the heir apparent, to whom was given the imposing title of Lord of the Eastern House. A privy council comprised four "atwinwuns," of whom one, the minister of the interior in the following reign, was a coolie slave who owed his advancement to a lurid accident. When in 1866 two of the royal princes, as we have seen already, conspired to seize the throne, they made their way to the summer palace within the royal City of Gems. It was their aim to destroy the king as he passed from his inner sanctuary to this palace in the outer enclosure. They accordingly posted a man at the gate with instructions to kill Mindon as soon as he appeared. But they reckoned without their host. The king, upon seeing a man standing idly by, sprang upon his back and ordered his astonished bearer to carry him across. As the king dismounted, the conspirator's da (a curved dagger) fell to the ground. A coolie of the royal guard, knowing that no man beside the king might carry arms

within the palace precinct, promptly seized the da and used it to cut off the head of the would-be assassin. Mindon made the coolie a courtier on the spot. Through the offices of slipper-bearer and betel-box holder he rose, step by step, until he became admiral of the royal barges. In the next reign he was made mayor of Mandalay, and passed thence into the privy council of the realm.

Thus, as in all ages of barbarism, the path to political power lay through the uncertain favour of the king. The lowest slave might at his whim become in a moment his trusty counsellor, and at the next might lie prone upon the ground under the pitiless noonday sun, with a heavy weight upon his breast, or—direst of all brutalities—exposed to the maddening bites of a nest of ants. No courtier received a fixed salary; the chief officers of State found their emoluments in the labour of the poor in certain areas; in the inferior ranks fees and perquisites were exacted at will. Thus the whole land was racked by extortion. The very gaoler would torture his prisoners until they purchased relief—nay, even permission to live—by yielding up their possessions. Under such a rule, to build a good house was to invite the unscrupulous attentions of the tax-gatherer. Treason was punished by flinging the traitor to wild beasts; desertion from the royal service led to disembowelment; robbers were

crucified, sometimes with the added torture of fractured limbs. Seven classes of slaves were recognized—prisoners of war, debtors, pagoda outcasts, burners of the dead, gaolers, executioners, and lepers. When a man was no longer able to pay the fines inflicted by the court a ring was tattooed upon his cheek, or the name of his offence upon his breast, in token of outlawry. If the king took a dislike to a man he petulantly whispered, "I don't want to see that man any more," and the hint was taken by his obedient henchmen. Under such a rule, capricious, tyrannical, barbaric, there was no incentive to honest labour, no security of life, property, or honour. In such a rule there was no vitality, no permanence, no future.

The Mongolian recognizes no difference in essence between civil and military life. Every magistrate is presumed in theory to be as adept with the sword as with the pen. At the end of Mindon's reign, under the exertions of Italian and French organizers, Burma possessed a uniformed army of 16,000 men. But as a fighting weapon it was a despicable farce. The red lacquered helmets of the men were adorned with mirrors, each section had a man bearing a tinkling gong, drill was made up largely of kneeling movements in order to "shiko" to the officers, and the battery elephants and commissariat bullocks shikoed also, with all the

aplomb of veteran warriors. The navy consisted of a few paddle steamers on the river, armed with jingals, and a fleet of about 500 boats, including some old-fashioned war galleys, which were paddled by two or three score men apiece. The heart of the king was never won over to new-fangled European methods of defence. He was a Mongol to the end, and it was when the English first began to bring their hated steamships up the river to the walls of Ava that Mindon Min determined to build a new capital at Mandalay, in order—as was said—not to be disturbed by the pestilent noises caused day and night by the steamers at the quay.

CHAPTER VI

THE FATUITY OF THEBAW

SUCH was the Burma that Mindon Min left as a heritage to his successor. Who was that successor to be?

According to Burmese custom the eldest daughter of the king—as we should say, the princess royal—was expected to remain unwed during her father's lifetime. At his decease there would always be a half-brother to ascend the throne, and, in royal union with the chief princess, to continue the dynasty unimpaired. Besides the four chief queens—the queens of the south, the east, the north, and the west—Mindon Min recognized forty-nine others, by whom there were born to him forty-eight sons and sixty-two daughters. Of this multitude of royalty three princesses, the daughters of the

southern queen, were called the chief, the Supayas. The English in Mandalay used to dub them Sophia. Queen Sinbyumayin, the king's favourite, was an ambitious woman whose mother was the old sorceress queen, Menu. From her she inherited the unscrupulous temperament without which the ambition to be supreme amid the complex jealousies of an Oriental harem seldom spells success. In the fateful autumn of 1878 this queen began to cast about among her many stepsons for one who, by becoming king and wedding her daughters, might be made subservient to herself as the power behind the throne.

Four of the king's sons, including the two princes who sought his life in 1866, were in Calcutta, and sixteen others were already dead. Of those who remained in Mandalay the eldest, the Nyaungyan prince, was by common report deemed to be the king's destined heir. But there was another, a prince whose paternity is doubted even to this day, and whose position in the palace was a curious one. This Thebaw, the son of a wild Shan woman, assumed the yellow robe of monkhood even in his seventh year, and when Dr. Marks, the S.P.G. missionary in Mandalay, was invited by the old king to teach some of his sons English, the young Thebaw prince was among the number. He proved to be a studious boy, and when, after a time, he went into the monastery again, he

carried with him the memory of the jeers with which his half-brothers taunted him as "the hpongyi's son." During his school career his lawless pranks nearly led to his rustication, but during his college days in the royal monastery he read the sacred books to such purpose that he passed three examinations with flying colours, to the childish delight of the king. Indeed, Mindon Min, who was nothing if not pious, came almost to look upon him as an embryo Buddha.

This was the youth, now twenty years of age, who was chosen by the southern queen to be the pliant tool of her ambition. Having secured the aid of the prime minister—the Kinwun Mingyi who had gone to Windsor six years before—she bided her opportunity. When the weary monarch lay at the point of death, they caused a message to be sent to his sons to assemble in the palace, in order to listen to his will. The Nyaungyan prince, suspicious of treachery, fled with his brother to the British residency, whence they were afterwards sent to Calcutta for safety's sake. The others, who kept the tryst, were thrown into prison. At the beginning of October it was known that Mindon's end had come—whether aided by a dose of opium in oil one need not too curiously inquire—and Thebaw was placed upon the peacock throne.

A comedy of jealousy was now enacted.

He himself was in love with the eldest Supaya, and his hope was to espouse her. Were this arranged, he was quite willing to fall in with the plans of the queen-mother, by wedding also her favourite daughter, the Supaya Lat. This ambitious girl was ready enough to play her part in the drama, for from her childish days she had put forth all her blandishments to enslave the heart of the yellow-robed princeling. Great was Thebaw's chagrin when he learned that his own love declined the bargain, and that to end the argument she had suddenly sheared her tresses and taken refuge in a nunnery. Thus it came about that the middle Supaya became Thebaw's consort, and this marriage of convenience—as such marriages, East or West, are apt to do—became a tragedy. For Supaya Lat found the man to whom she had given her passionate heart to be a weak-willed despot, while Thebaw was not long in discovering his queen to be a termagant.

The queen and her mother soon realized that their power—nay, their very lives—hung upon the maintenance of the new order. Each of Mindon's sons was a latent peril while he lived. Few monarchs before and after Alaungpaya deemed themselves secure upon the throne until the approaches to it had been cleared by judicious massacres. Hence it was that in January, 1879, Thebaw succumbed to the arguments of these resolute women, and decreed the death of Mindon's progeny.

For three days the palace in Mandalay became a shambles. Fifteen of his half-brothers, four of his half-sisters, and sixty others, met their fate. No prince obtained release without torture, no princess without barbarity. The "wun" who sought to curry favour by carrying out his master's will seized defenceless children by the hair, and battered them against the palace walls. The aged pensioner who, as governor of Rangoon a quarter of a century before, hurled his futile slights at the British power, had his mouth and nostrils stuffed with gunpowder, and so he died. By day bands of music and troops of pliant dancing girls filled the palace with their callous mirth; when the sun went down the bodies of the victims were loaded upon a caravan of bullock carts, and flung into the river. Strong men gibbered for mercy, women with drawn faces begged for a speedier death. Thengzi, the eldest prince of all, alone displayed the courage of his race. For, as his turn came, he looked round at his brothers and exclaimed with a laugh, "See, I told you we should have no release but death."

News of the tragedy filtered down to Rangoon, and flew across the world. Men's hearts were wrung with the tidings. Mr. Shaw, our resident in Mandalay, telegraphed a tear-stained report to Calcutta, and an indignant protest was made by the British Government

against these unspeakable barbarities. But Thebaw, with the stolid *insouciance* of the East, merely shrugged his shoulders, returned an insolent rejoinder, and sought relief in strong liquors from the remorse and the nervous reaction that threatened to obscure his reason.

During the summer Supaya Lat bore her lord an heir, and the event seemed but to intensify the frenzied arrogance of the king. Shaw was now dead, killed at his post by the strain of the nameless horrors through which he had lived during the cold season. Colonel Horace Browne, who succeeded him, was shortly afterwards withdrawn by the Government of India, who did not care for their diplomatic relations to be made a mockery. His place was filled by Mr. St. Barbe, whose lot it was to be slain by dacoits later on. He, too, endured the studied insults of the barbaric court, until his Government gave up the struggle on behalf of international amity, and ordered him to leave.

Early in the new year Mandalay was swept by a visitation of smallpox, which carried off not only the veteran gamester, Pagan Min, but also Thebaw's infant son. A huge ruby, a cherished heirloom of the ancient Alompra regalia, mysteriously vanished. A royal tiger escaped from its cage in the palace precincts, and turned man-eater in the streets of Manda-

lay. The king was like all Burmans; there lay at the back of his faith in the Lord Buddha a sneaking belief in the old spirit-worship from which the Mongol races have never freed themselves. It was clear to his superstitious mind that in some way or other the guardian "nats" of the City of Gems had taken offence, and after a solemn conclave with his wise men he determined to appease their wrath.

His plan was to sacrifice to the offended spirits 500 human souls, men and women, boys and girls, and foreigners—a hundred each. No less than 200 arrests for this purpose were made, when the king began to fear that the wrath of the British Government might prove harder to appease than that of the invisible nats. Yet, although this religious holocaust was shorn of its larger terrors, it is believed to this day that men and women of all ages were, to the number of a hundred, buried alive beneath the gates and walls of the city one by one. Thebaw's luck now seemed to him to have turned; for when the Nyaungyan prince's younger brother hurried away from his exile home in Calcutta, and crossed the frontier, the raid came to an untimely end, and the Golden Feet trod the Centre of the Universe in peace once more.

The second child of Supaya Lat was a daughter, and in the following year a girl once more appeared. The king was furious, and as

his consort lay helpless, her hands already stained with the blood of her elder sister, he resolved to pluck up his courage and to build up a harem four-square to the winds of heaven. To the youngest Supaya he was already wedded. The queens of the east, the north, and the west, whom he now installed in their several palaces, had their little day, and then they ceased to be. For when the outraged consort, the queen of the south, was about again, she sent the Taingda—whom Englishmen called the home secretary—to her rivals' chambers. With a deprecating shrug the courtier explained his mission, and received the reply, "Do not put me to death; I will take poison." And with this the doomed queens turned their faces to the wall, and sought the vial which was always kept in readiness for the inevitable end.

In September, 1884, news reached the outer world of still another massacre, in which as many as 300 prisoners, men and women, were said to have found release from the maddening uncertainty of their lot. It was the evening of Sunday when the news came to them that they were to be set free from their long incarceration. In the first flush of this unhopèd-for liberty they streamed madly, merrily, out into the starless night. In a moment there pounced upon them a horde of ruffians who themselves had been liberated on condition that they rendered this yeoman service to the king. Is

there any wonder that the populace counted it their highest happiness to be unknown, and that they learned to rue the day when they were fated to be marked out for kingly recognition?

Indeed, the best that a tolerant charity can find to say of the wayward monarch is that he was at heart but a base poltroon. Low-browed, puny of body, furtive of mien, with the flabby cheek and weak chin that are born of self-indulgence, he had no will with which to contend against the masterful woman who bore on her forehead all the marks of her regal descent. Supaya Lat, with her large eyes, her dark visage, her cruel lips, displayed in every gesture, every act, her lust of dominion. A maid of honour to the dowager queen conveyed to her mistress a portrait of her exiled son, and when Supaya Lat was apprised of the incident she sent an executioner to lay a bamboo rod across the poor girl's throat. One afternoon she sent for her half-sisters who lay in gaol, to pay her a visit. With the sordid vanity of the feminine mind she arrayed herself in her brightest silks, and gloated over their disgrace. Then with intolerable insolence she gave them a dinner, to remind them of the might-have-been, and told a servile myrmidon to find for them each a cheap tamein (a Burmese petticoat) and 100 rupees for pocket money.

All this time relations between the two

Burmas were being strained to the point of fracture. Early in his reign Thebaw sought to send an embassy to the viceroy of India. It remained on the frontier for eight months, and its members then returned to Mandalay, to meet the reward prescribed by custom for their ill-success. In defiance of his treaty obligations the king created monopolies, to the detriment alike of British and of Burmese interests, and it was only when the Indian Government, through the mouth of Lord Ripon, despatched a serious remonstrance, that the monopolies were withdrawn. When Lord Ripon was in Rangoon, at the end of 1881, Thebaw sent an official of the fifth class down to the coast to meet him ; but, whether of studied contempt or not, the envoy arrived too late. In the following year a seemlier embassy reached Rangoon, and was conveyed by a British gun-boat, with every mark of favour, to Calcutta, whence it went up to Simla. A treaty was offered to the envoys, but they were not intended to be more than spies, and before they opened negotiations they were peremptorily recalled.

At first men hoped against hope that the disorders in Upper Burma, which were a standing menace to the peace of South-east Asia, might after all give place to worthier ideals of government. But year by year hope gave place to a deeper pessimism, as the self-willed poten-

tate seemed to flout the English power with impunity.

At length, in 1885, an incident in the relations of the king with the British trading community suddenly found itself the immediate cause of an international struggle of far wider scope and importance. The Burmese Government, on the plea that the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation, which held a timber concession from the king, was seeking to defraud him of his royalties by floating large logs down the Irawadi as if they were small ones, determined to impose an exemplary fine. The Burmese demanded 23 lakhs, and, when the fine was resisted, expressed their willingness to accept a twentieth of that sum. The Government of India, resolute that British subjects should have full justice, proposed to submit the dispute to arbitration. The hlotdaw declined to set aside the decision of its own court. The holders of the concession declared their willingness to let the matter drop by making a small settlement, without prejudice to the integrity of their rights, but the British Government were unwilling to abate one jot of their demand for justice as between the two empires.

It was the beginning of the end.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY

SHORTLY after the fall of the third Napoleon, Mindon Min despatched an embassy to Paris. Its instructions were to propose to the Government of the Republic a treaty of commerce similar to that which Britain had secured from him a few years before. In 1873 these new international relations, which had been in abeyance since the old days of Dupleix, the governor of Pondicherry, a century before, were enlarged by a visit of the Comte de Rochechouart to Mandalay. It was suspected at the time that a secret convention was signed, but this was disavowed by the French Government, and the treaty discussed in Paris was not ratified.

In the reign of Thebaw the removal of the

British resident from his capital was the signal for a renewed attempt on the part of the Burmese Government to play off French influence against the power of Britain. In his more ambitious moods Thebaw dreamed of restoring to the Burmese empire, under modern conditions, something of the majesty and splendour of past centuries. He possessed a huge arsenal, which was run to some extent by Italian engineers. His standing army of 16,000 men, his river fleet of ten steamers and some war galleys, have been already described. He proposed to himself to manufacture breech-loading rifles for the troops and torpedoes for the navy. He indeed went so far as to send an embassy down to the frontier to invite a new treaty with Britain, under which he should be at liberty to import arms and ammunition at will. But the embassy, as we have seen, was sent back.

These rebuffs to his aspirations led the king in 1883 to despatch envoys to Paris, to complete the ratification of the treaty offered by Mindon Min a dozen years before. The envoys were required not only to form a close alliance with the nation which was fast closing in upon the eastern frontier of Burma, but also to seek relations with other European powers. Mr. (afterwards Sir) Charles Bernard, the Chief Commissioner, obtained copies of certain documents which threw an interesting light upon

the activity of the French through the persistence of their premier in Paris, and afterwards of M. Haas, their agent in Mandalay. They were shown to be endeavouring to secure the principal sources of revenue in Upper Burma, to control the Irawadi traffic, to construct a new railway, and by this means to sit astride the trade connections between British Burma and Western China. The intelligence was confirmed from Paris, where Thebaw's emissaries spent the greater part of two years in coming to terms with the men who at that time were engaged upon the consolidation of the French colonial domains in Indo-China. Tangible proposals were at length made. The sum of £1,000,000 was to be subscribed, under the tacit inspiration of the French Government. It was to be devoted to the establishment of a French bank in Mandalay, the creation of a steamship fleet upon the Irawadi, the exploitation of the jade and ruby mines, and the nursing of a route from Upper Tonquin through the Shan States to the Burmese capital.

All this time the Government of India was endeavouring to bring Thebaw to book, on the ground that his weak and unfriendly policy was a source of political disturbance throughout the peninsula. The counts of the indictment were many: his disregard of treaty rights; his discouragement of trade; his refusal to entertain a British resident at Mandalay unless all trans-

actions were conducted to his personal advantage; his barbarities, not only to his own relatives and subjects, but also to British subjects, who were sometimes suspended for hours by their ankles in the stocks; his monopoly of the trade in letpet--pickled tea--which caused a hardship to the whole population of Lower Burma; his establishment of gaming houses, whereby the wealth of the people found its way into the royal coffers; his high-handed confiscation of the property of the timber corporation, with whom his cabinet was in dispute. All these causes of friction were of themselves enough to warrant resolute action on the part of the adjacent empire, through whose moderation in victory after the campaign of 1824-6, and again in 1852, a Burmese monarchy still remained in the Irawadi valley.

But the real ground of offence on the part of the king was his dalliance with foreign powers. Notwithstanding the fact that the British ambassador in Paris pronounced any kind of political treaty to be objectionable, a convention was entered into in January, 1885, between the persistent envoys of Thebaw and M. Jules Ferry, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This convention was believed to include a secret article providing for the supply of war material to the Burmese Government. Three months later the Ferry Cabinet fell to pieces, and the new foreign minister, M. de

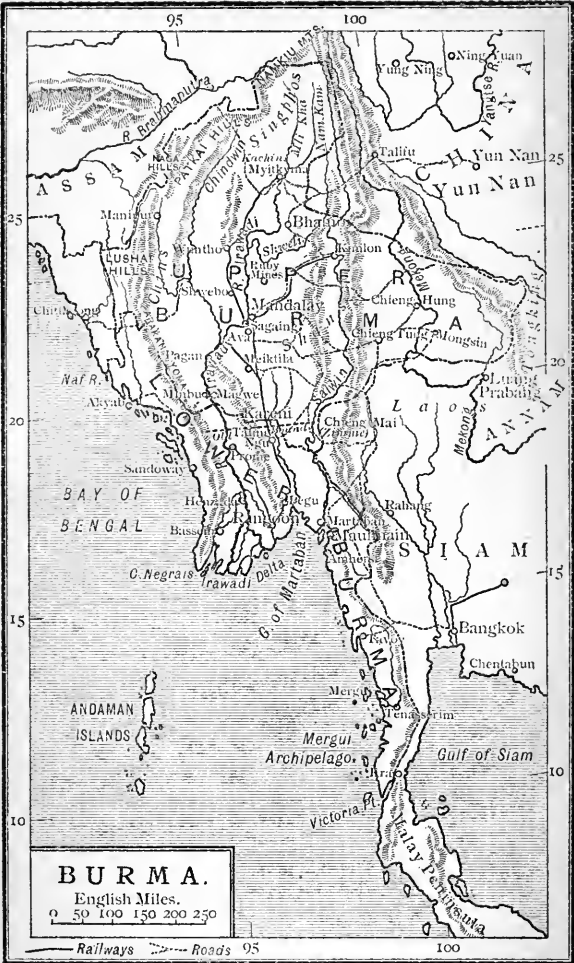
Freycinet, was invited to explain the intentions of France with respect to Upper Burma. His answer was that any convention entered into with the Burmese Government implied no desire on the part of the Republic to procure political preponderance, and, indeed, that British influence in Burma would not be questioned by the French.

The Government of India acted with promptitude after receiving this admission, and an ultimatum was addressed to Thebaw on October 22nd. He was required to declare within four days that he would in future regulate his foreign relations in accordance with the advice of the Indian Government; that he would receive at Mandalay a British resident, who should transact affairs to the mutual benefit of the two powers; and that he would submit his dispute with the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation to the arbitration of a court consisting of a Burmese and a British officer.

On the 3rd of November General Prendergast left Madras in H.M.S. "Clive," in order to be in readiness to act in the event of a refusal on the part of the Burmese Government. While the British troops were crossing the Bay of Bengal Thebaw issued an appeal to his subjects to remain quiet in their villages while his Invincibles drove the British into the sea. "These English barbarians," he declared, "having most harshly made demands calculated

95

100



BURMA.

English Miles.

0 50 100 150 200 250

Railways

Roads

95

100

to bring about . . . the abolition of our national traditions and customs, and the degradation of our race, are making a show of preparation as if about to wage war with our State." He was soon destined to learn that the ultimatum was no idle threat. On the 8th the expeditionary force landed in Rangoon, and on the following day an unconditional "no" was received from the Arbiter of Existence. Five days later the British flotilla, carrying 9,500 men and 77 guns, steamed past the pillars of Dalhousie on the road to Mandalay.

The force was made up of bluejackets, British artillery and infantry, and detachments of native troops. But for the personal initiative of an English officer, Major Edmond Browne, who organized a volunteer troop in Rangoon while Prendergast was crossing the bay, there would have been no mounted infantry at all. The commander posted a party at Taungngu with instructions to co-operate with the river force. The head-quarters staff was on the steamer "Thambyadine," and some of the steamers were flanked by flats upon which the troops found such accommodation as they could. After passing the frontier, parties were landed on both banks in order to dislodge any opposition that might be formed at awkward bends. The first incident was the capture of one of Thebaw's steamers, sent down from Mandalay with a flat in tow, for the purpose of being sunk in mid-stream.

Two stockades were rushed without incident two days after the invasion began, and on the 17th the first shot was fired at Gwegyaung, where a masked battery, commanding a narrow channel, attempted to arrest the advance. A halt was made to land a British detachment, which had no difficulty in capturing the battery by a flanking movement, supported by a few shells from a gunboat which dispersed the garrison. The stockade was found to be defended by a few worthless pieces of antique ordnance. Some native troops operated successfully under the walls of Minhla, which had been fortified by the king's Italian engineers. Day by day the flotilla suppressed the half-hearted opposition offered by Thebaw's soldiery. A war-boat came down-stream flying a flag of truce, and asking for an armistice with the object of discussing an amicable treaty. The British sent an answer to the effect that Thebaw's life would be spared on condition of the surrender on the following day of the king, his army, and his capital. To this message Thebaw vouchsafed no reply.

On the 22nd the expedition reached the historic neighbourhood of Pagan, the sacred city of 10,000 pagodas, around whose desolate spires were entwined the storied memories of Burma's ancient might. Four days later the invaders lay under the walls of Ava. At this point the measures taken for the military

defence of Thebaw's capital were pitiable in their very childishness. Two forts were erected on the bank, but instead of the river bar being placed below them, to permit of the flotilla being shelled while hampered by the shallows, it was placed up-stream, and the reduction of the forts was the work of a moment. Two steamships and fourteen galleys were sunk by the enemy; but their funnels and carved sternposts were left exposed, and so marked out the waterway. A floating *chevaux de frise* was built of pointed logs of teak, but it had been captured before it could be sunk. The king numbered in his *entourage* young Burmans who had learned something of the theory of war in the military schools of France; but their knowledge went for naught in the rabble army that was without engineers and without artillery.

So it was that, as soon as General Prendergast started upon the final stretch of water between Ava and Mandalay, an envoy arrived from the king to signify his submission. The flotilla lay off the city on the morning of November 26th. The chief minister, the Kinwun Mingyi, was sent for, but as he delayed his appearance the expeditionary force was landed. Marching through the suburbs, it surrounded the walls of the city, whose brick embattlements are those of a Mongol fort of the Middle Ages, and entered the sacred precincts of the gilded palace. Colonel Sladen, who had been

present at the abortive palace conflict of 1866, was the principal civil officer deputed to accompany the expedition. His earlier experience stood him in good stead. He proceeded unarmed into the presence of the king, who thereupon resigned himself to fate. Thebaw unconditionally relinquished his kingdom, his treasure, and his army, and Mandalay was ours.

No good purpose would be served by enlarging upon the incidents of the occupation. During that memorable night confusion reigned supreme. Thebaw's civic police was efficient enough in a crude fashion. From sunset to sunrise no Burman might pass the cords drawn across the roadways. But, during this fateful afternoon, police, soldiery, palace guards, gaolers, all had fled. The bazaar was closed. The bellringers who boomed the watch every three hours in the campanile of the palace had disappeared, and the silence of the great bell filled the populace with unimaginable fears. The relations of the king, who for years had been pining in their dungeons, observed with dismay the absence of the guards, and fled tremblingly for refuge to the house of a Greek lady, who with rare courage sheltered them from further molestation.

The occupation came about with such ease and suddenness that no plans had been formed for the preservation of order. A guard of the

Hampshires and of the Madras Pioneers, under the direction of Brigadier-General White,* was placed in the palace, and strong pickets were posted at each of the city gates. The rest of the invading force returned to the boats. The military executive were blamed by subsequent critics for not having organized a town patrol during those early hours of the conquest. Yet it is arguable that if armed troops, ignorant of the language and of Burmese manners, had appeared among the frightened populace during that anxious night, worse evils might have befallen.

Many legends have grown up around the fact that the royal treasure brought away by the victors was meagre in the extreme. The scum of the city indulged in much petty plunder. But of loot in the general sense there was comparatively little. A few flags and spears were carried away, by permission of the leaders of the expedition, together with some undisclosed plunder. But the soldiery kept themselves well in hand; a Madrasi sapper who found a necklet gave it up to his officer. The princesses who fled from the palace were for long believed to have carried little hoards of jewellery with them. In no other way could the disappearance of the fabled magnificence of Thebaw's court be explained. But, indeed, the barbaric wealth of the Burmese dynasty

Afterwards the defender of Ladysmith.

was a myth. The Alompra regalia, as recorded by Colonel Richard Temple when serving as cantonment magistrate in Mandalay, comprised fifty-eight articles, all told. Bagyidaw left behind him eleven boxes and bowis, a pair of flower pots, some candelabra, and a pillow rest. Mindon added four flower vases to the royal treasure. Besides these there were, of unrecorded date, eight umbrellas, sixteen fans, a tea pot, a bowl for pickled tea, a scent box, five other bowls, stands for shoes, clothes, and water pots, a spear and sceptre, and a chin rest. Some part of this treasure, together with a miscellaneous collection of personal jewellery of more recent date, is now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum.* The glittering mosaics of the Centre of the Universe were of common glass, set in a mastic of cement. The huge mirrors of the palace were made in London, framed in English oak, and gilded with English gold. Thebaw's taste ran to tawdriness. He once got out a portmanteau, when he had thoughts of visiting Rangoon. It was $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and was lined with sensuous oleographs of cheap German design. Yet so persistent was the faith in a buried treasure that years afterwards the confession of an English

* The collection consists of nearly 250 separate pieces, and includes 22 finger rings, 20 armlets, 5 pairs of ear plugs, 65 gold plaques and other ornaments, a dozen hats and dresses, and 2 Buddhas.

soldier led the Government to undertake serious explorations within the precincts of the captured palace. It is needless to add that naught was found.

On the morrow of the occupation the troops marched up to the palace once more, and Colonel Sladen lost no time in organizing a provisional government. The hlotdaw was prevailed upon to continue its functions, and both the chief minister, who by this time was old and fussy, and the Taingda, a feeble-looking man of forty, were retained in power under the presidency of the British civil officer. The king and the Supayas, with their mother, were bundled into a bullock gharry and sent down to the wharf. The maids of honour were offered hospital doolies to ride in, but turned up their noses at them and mostly preferred to walk. By nightfall all were embarked upon one of the river steamers, in which they were sent down to Rangoon. The three chief passengers were sent to Madras, and an exile home was made for them at Ratnagiri, on the Malabar coast. The princesses were accompanied to Rangoon by their foster-mothers, and allowances were given to them on a scale that cannot be deemed extravagant. One of them, indeed, on being offered a monthly dole of Rs. 15, declined it with feminine grace, saying that she preferred the liberty of earning her own sustenance to the wage of a coolie.

Ringers were found for the great bell, whose booming announced to the city that the government was restored, and at this welcome signal the bazaars were reopened. But of the vast population of Mandalay 20,000 men and women had learned under the old *régime* to depend for their sustenance upon the palace, and starvation, sudden, pitiless, unexpected, now stared them in the face. The reaping of the crops had been suspended during the excitement of the British advance, and food was scarce. Happily there was continuous rain during the advance of the expedition, and the promise of a large February crop helped to allay the apprehensions of the people. A public works department was swiftly improvised, and the metalling of the magnificent roads around the city gave immediate employment to several thousands of men and women, who were paid night by night a wage that kept them from hunger.

Excitement in Lower Burma ran high because of the general uncertainty. What was to be the fate of the Burmese kingdom, as determined by the home Government? Lord Salisbury was believed in some quarters to favour the policy of maintaining the throne under British protection, by placing upon it as Thebaw's successor a boy of fourteen, whose father, the Nyaungyan prince, inopportunately died at Barrackpur shortly before the annexation. There

is little doubt that had Supaya Lat or some other princess been a strong, capable woman, there would have been a regency. The French agent in Mandalay endeavoured to hamper the settlement by declining to recognize the provisional government. But the only effect of this move was to cause an intimation to be made that for diplomatic reasons Upper Burma was to be regarded as under British rule.

During the previous cold season Chinese raiders had taken possession of Bhamo, and it was known that Peking had never abandoned its claim to the possession of Bhamo, and the country southward to the river Shweli. The answer to this was the departure for Bhamo of Sir Harry Prendergast, with a force of 2,000 men. Before the expedition started a pony race was organized on the straight mile that lay between the wall of the city and the lotus-laden moat. The officers indulged in hurdle racing, to the immense delight of the populace, who came to realize that the victors were kindly-hearted men, and not ogres, after all. The river party comprised a detachment of the naval brigade, a mountain battery, a company of engineers, and thirty mounted troops. During the night the villagers along the banks were terrified out of their wits by the electric search-light that played upon them from the roof of a steamer. The flotilla grounded upon sandbanks almost daily; but, after many

delays, Bhamo was reached. Three days after Christmas the general landed with a handful of staff officers and walked up to the town. He encountered no resistance, and the Burmese garrison of 250 nonchalant warriors were sent laughing down to Mandalay.

On New Year's day Lord Dufferin put an end to the general uncertainty by this proclamation :

“By command of the Queen-Empress it is hereby notified that the territories formerly governed by King The Bau will no longer be under his rule, but have become a part of Her Majesty's dominions, and will, during Her Majesty's pleasure, be administered by such officers as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India may from time to time appoint.”

CHAPTER VIII

DACOITY

THE news of the peaceable entry of the expedition into Thebaw's capital was received in England with a pæan of delight. The Press, echoing the popular voice, hastened to predict a period of instant prosperity for the rich valley of the Irawadi, thus at length united under the protecting arm of British rule. No such illusions were cherished by the experienced men upon whose shoulders lay the burden of our empire in the East. The officials who, from the decks of the flotilla, descried gaunt men watching them listlessly from the river bank, and when they landed saw before them the spectacle of whole families munching sesamum seed, or feasting upon pariah dogs, muttered to themselves that troublous times lay ahead.

The expedition was accompanied by five

civil officers. Two of them, Colonel Sladen and his assistant, proceeded to Mandalay ; the others were dropped at three different points upon the river bank. In a deluge of rain they stood by their scanty baggage, surrounded by their slender force of soldiery, and watched the flotilla fade up the river, while there crowded into their lives the need for instant action. The territory in which these young men, barely thirty years of age, were directed to establish order, and to extend their influence inland as far as possible, comprised an area of 40,000 square miles, larger by one-fourth than the whole area of Ireland. One of them proceeded to Pagan, and found its streets deserted, save for half a dozen old men and women. Cholera was rife among the troops, and the horizon was heavy with storm. Yet in a week the townsmen began to filter back again, the bazaars were opened, and the deputy commissioner got his proclamations carried from village to village. The headmen came in, and were confirmed in their posts ; others were made responsible for the homesteads in groups of ten, and a complete chain of responsibility was thus established between the young white ruler and his myriad subjects. All would have been well but for the uncertainties of the hour. When the civil officer was asked "What of the future?" he could only shrug his shoulders and affect a nonchalance he did not feel.

It is a tradition of the India Office to rule India by its native chiefs wherever possible. There were many pretenders to the throne, for not all Thebaw's massacres could stamp out the Alompra brood. The home Government cast about for a working plan, and the retention of the hlotdaw was a consistent act of policy. But the ministers, with an eye to the main chance, soon began to intrigue on their own account with the pretenders. Some of these had their paper constitutions, as the Stuart pretenders had in their day, and in the list of appointments prepared by one of them an illiterate dacoit was entered as director of public instruction. It was because of the impossibility of using to any good purpose the corrupt system of native administration that the British rulers were at length compelled to accept the unwelcome necessity of annexation.

The primary difficulty lay in the scanty facilities for transport. The commissariat officers in Mandalay worked night and day. Young subalterns scoured the Mandalay plain for Thebaw's wandering elephants. Beds were sodden, tents were flooded. Two thousand coolies were brought hastily from the Punjab, and there were a few hundred Madrasi bearers. Yet, notwithstanding these drawbacks, the New Year did not dawn before strong garrisons were posted in all the river towns, while 2,000 obsolete cannon and 7,000 muskets were collected from the enemy.

If there had only been a force of mounted infantry to patrol the jungles much trouble might have been saved. For, as if by magic, the new administrators found themselves face to face with the dreary fact of dacoity. By the middle of December, barely a fortnight after the occupation of Mandalay was announced in London, intelligence had filtered through of dacoit bands having been encountered on the way to Bhamo. At the moment that the viceroy in Calcutta was penning the act of annexation, expeditions were already being sent out to every point of the compass to quell the insurgents. In a word, the era of massacre had ended and the era of dacoity had begun.

To the man in the street dacoity, or gang-robbery, was a new phenomenon. Yet the word had been in use in India for a century and more. It found its way into an earlier chapter, when the story of the second Burmese war was being hurriedly told; I used it, too, of the marauder bands who made Chittagong their base in the day when Shore was pro-consul. He it was, indeed, who introduced into the Bengal Regulations of 1793 a section prescribing a reward of 10 rupees for the apprehension of a dacoit; and the Indian Penal Code,* whose compilation was started as soon as John Company was no more, defined dacoity as robbery by a gang of not less than five.

* Section 391.

Under the weak rule of Thebaw the country grew more and more lawless, and the disturbance became acute during the last months of his reign. The year 1885, indeed, was for Upper Burma a time of much privation, and but for the 95,000 tons of rice sent up-country across the British frontier from the delta province the people would have perished. The Burmese government were compelled to act in self-defence, and a thousand dacoits were brought into Mandalay and branded with a mark that would save the formality of a trial when arrested a second time. The native code of justice punished dacoity with a fine at least, more commonly by beating with bamboos, often by hanging the culprit upon a cross. To the lawless subjects thus inherited by the new masters of the country were now added the rabble army who fled before the approach of the British force. It was a moderate estimate that the dacoits to be reckoned with at the moment of the annexation numbered 10,000 all told.

To the Burman, to whom all life is a paradox, dacoity is excusable in times of peace, and becomes in times of disturbance a laudable virtue. At such a period, as even the sober judgment of the *Athenæum* once candidly admitted, "the only choice left him is that of dacoiting or of being dacoited." The British commander issued a general order that all Burmans found in possession of arms or engaged

in pillage were to be shot, and that all suspects were to be flogged. For this purpose the navy cat-o'-nine tails, found in the baggage of the bluejackets who went up-country, introduced many a Burman suspected of dacoity to sensations that were novel, even to the victims of Thebaw's power. With the history of that era behind us, it is dubious whether the disarmament of the whole population made for pacification. The story is told that a Chinaman in the early days of the insurrection found himself one night at a riverside village below Mandalay, with a boat-load of rice upon which, with the thrifty courage of his race, he hoped to turn an honest rupee. When his cargo of 250 bags was dumped upon the bank, he sought in vain for a villager willing to buy the parcel and retail it to the needy populace. His gun had been taken from him, and he was accordingly defenceless. So he sat upon the heap sleeplessly through the long, tropic night, fearing that at any moment a gang might swoop down from the jungle and fling him into the stream. Happily for him, his fears were groundless. But it was this very lack of arms that drove many a man to join the robber gangs who might otherwise have made a stand against them. And it was not long before the military officers realized that the path of safety lay in serving out the arms of the bandits to loyal villagers.

The ease with which undefended villages

might be raided was a sore temptation to cupidity. Two Burman policemen, for example, who were in the British service in Lower Burma, obtained leave of absence on plea of "urgent private affairs." They took their weapons with them, crossed the frontier, and organized a raid. When the British troops got wind of the affair and went in pursuit they encountered a train of nineteen bullock carts, loaded up with the loot of three villages. Of this gang seven were shot, but there were hundreds of other gangs that for many a day went unpunished. The execution of dacoits captured during the first two months of British rule is by the verdict of history a blot upon the policy by which the military executive was guided. A dacoit is essentially a robber, not a murderer, and at the outset his motive was the venial one of obtaining food. That cruelties were practised by the more hardened outlaws cannot be gainsaid. Resistance in such cases was worse than useless. If the victims would not relinquish their property without trouble, the tortures to which they were subjected were barbarous in the extreme. Oil-sodden rags were bound about their fingers and toes, and a refusal to disclose the whereabouts of their little hoard of rupees was the signal for setting fire to their extremities. When this failed, as it often did—for the Burman is your true stoic—worse remained behind. They were bound upon a bamboo crucifix, and in that

attitude were irrevocably maimed. Even the property of the great British firms was deemed fair game by these daring marauders. One gang collected seventy-six elephants belonging to the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation, and drove them beyond reach of recovery into the fastnesses of the Shan tableland. During the three years 1887-9, 372 men and 132 women were tortured by dacoits in the central division of Upper Burma alone. Of these, 118 cases resulted in death.

Yet when the hour of reckoning came there was no whining cowardice about these brigand Burmans. A detachment of the naval brigade one day effected the capture of a dozen dacoits, and resolved to inflict exemplary punishment in the hope of discouraging the epidemic of insurgency. Instead, therefore, of putting the gang to death by a single volley, the officer in command resolved to execute them one by one. The first was placed with his back to the wall, and a conical ball discharged at short range struck him upon the temple and carried off the upper half of the skull, as one decapitates an eggshell with a breakfast knife. His comrades, who were stolidly awaiting their turn, screamed with laughter at the spectacle, and as they advanced to the place of execution they one by one maintained their merriment to the last.

On the 3rd of February the viceroy embarked at Calcutta in order to visit in person the new

province, which at a stroke of the pen he had added as a New Year's gift to Her Majesty's dominions. On the same day a general order was issued by the officer in command of the expedition, by which the indiscriminate execution of dacoits was brought to an end. Nine days later Lord Dufferin drove to Thebaw's palace, in a carriage drawn by four magnificent English horses, and guarded by stalwart Sikhs. As he stood in the Hall of Audience, and assumed the title of Governor of Upper Burma, he realized behind all his congratulations that the white man's burden was but just begun. Lady Dufferin, with regal grace, held a reception to which Burmese ladies were bidden; but the attendance was small, because as yet the womanhood of the land was scarcely reconciled to the new aspect of things. When the viceroy reached the river bank to re-embark, he turned to the assembled ministers of the deposed monarch and said: "You have now become British subjects, under the rule of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress, and I have no doubt that you will serve her with loyalty and fidelity."

At the end of December the Taingda, who was at first retained in power, had been suddenly arrested in the hlotdaw by Colonel Sladen, and sent into exile like his royal master before him. The arrival of the viceroy was the signal for the abolition of the hlotdaw itself, and

from that time forward the annexed country was administered by the unaided judgment of British civil commissioners, four of whom took charge of the new divisions. In March Sir Harry Prendergast vacated the command in favour of Major-General White, whose task during the summer was made the more difficult by insurrections which had for their motive the restoration of the native dynasty.

The army of occupation did not relax its efforts. One of the pretenders, the Myinzaing prince, impudently offered a reward of Rs. 2,000 for the head of Sir Charles Bernard. At the beginning of the cold season, in the autumn of 1886, one chief had 1,300 men under his command ; at the end of it he was a fugitive, with a following of barely thirty desperate men. The period coincided with that of General (afterwards Lord) Roberts's Burma command. Hla U was a prisoner in the capital who had been released by Thebaw in order to take command of a garrison on the river. Fleeing into the northern hills he settled down to a marauder's life, and amused his followers with nightly games. When pursued he would lead his party to the edge of a ravine, take his carts to pieces, carry them across in sections, and set them up again on the other side. Routed by the dashing charge of a mounted troop, he retired into his inaccessible fastness, and celebrated the escape by a pungent "pwe." Abandoned at

length by his comrades, he was the victim of the treachery of his new-found friends, and his life was ended by the blow of one of his own men.

The outpost system by which the country was gradually quelled was rewarded with success, but only at tremendous cost. During the first twelvemonth only ninety-one native and European soldiers of all ranks were killed or died of wounds. But 930 died of disease, and 2,032 were invalided—a heavy toll out of a force of 14,000 men. In May, 1887, after eighteen months of British rule, Sir Charles Bernard himself was in broken health, and had to be replaced by Mr. Crosthwaite; the senior civil officer with the expedition had retired, one of his four colleagues was dead, and the others, after a defiant struggle against fever and dysentery, were each and all invalided home.

In April, 1886, one of the Alompra survivors, the Myinzaing prince, who claimed the throne, organized a band which set fire to the city of Mandalay, so that one-third of the houses within the ramparts were destroyed. The treasury was levelled with the ground, and several Europeans lost their lives. A fortnight later another incendiary act destroyed a tract a mile in length, and in the middle of the rains the embankment north of Mandalay was either burst by the flood or cut by dacoits, so that the town was swamped. On the anniversary of the

occupation there were 33,000 military and police troops in Upper Burma, and there was a large police force in the lower province. At the end of the year the resolute policy of the Chief Commissioner began to show the welcome spectacle of a territory freed from the more dangerous bands of insurgents. In the spring of the Jubilee year the Limbin prince, the last legitimate descendant of Mindon left in the field, surrendered to the inevitable. His father was the heir apparent who was killed during the rebellion of the Myingon prince in 1866, and his surrender was therefore of special moment. The last of the greater rebels, Bo Shwe, who was a professional marauder even in Thebaw's day, was driven from one fastness to another into the Arakan hills, where he was surprised in October, 1887, by Major Harvey, and slain in a desperate scuffle. It was then that men began to look forward with growing confidence to the time when the Irawadi valley would once more be brought, throughout its whole extent, under the reign of law.

CHAPTER IX

THE ENGLISH RAJ

THE story of the fifteen years that have followed the annexation is a story of silent, inconspicuous heroism. The soldier retired, with his gratuity of Rs. 38 and his Burma medal; the civilian came upon the scene. When the British commissioners took charge of the four divisions into which the new territory was parcelled out, they found themselves confronted by a task beside which the labours of Hercules seemed but the commonplace events of a gymkhana meeting. The lot was theirs to evolve order out of the chaos resulting from a century of misrule. The outlook was hopeless, and was bounded by an horizon of despair. The alluvial sand-pits that

change from monsoon to monsoon in the inconstant bed of the Irawadi were not more unstable than the shifting elements of the popular temperament, the popular ideals. Racked by fevers, haunted by unseen perils, depressed by the pitiless fact of solitary exile, bereft of the amenities of civilized existence, harassed by the ingratitude of the people whom they were endowing with new life at the sacrifice of their own, the men charged with the establishment of the British rule pursued their task with stubborn resoluteness. And year by year, out of these intractable materials, they erected the fabric of a settled order that stands to-day, in the eyes of all Asia, as a majestic example of the aptitude of the British race for Oriental dominion.

From the outset the motto of the new administrators was "Burma for the Burmans." They cherished no resentments, and they started with a clean slate. Under the old monarchy there stood between the despot and the peasant no wealthy class, no baronage, upon whom might rest the burden of protecting the common weal. The Arbiter of Existence ruled by right divine, and the people were but the servile instruments of his self-absorption. Their possessions filled his treasury, their daughters replenished his seraglio. To his minions he granted the right to exact from town and village the rewards of ruthless extortion. The official

received the cynical name of *myosa*, "town eater," his deputy the equally candid name of "bloodsucker." The royal princes, the *wuns*, the tax-collectors, together with the soldiery, the paddlers of the royal barge, the carriers of the royal palm-leaves, the holders of the royal betel-boxes, were paid for their services in land which might pass to their descendants. But to men of such a type land of itself was purposeless, and the value of the grant lay in the power which it conferred to exact from the peasantry attached to the soil their choicest labour, their most fertile crops.

When the new administration began its labours it inherited three descriptions of State land,—the royal demesnes, grants for personal service, and the islands in the Irawadi whose boundaries changed after every flood. To these the commissioners added all waste and forest land, and the abandoned holdings that were no longer cultivated. Under the Burmese government the rent of State lands was commonly fixed at one-fourth of the gross produce, and the holders were liable to eviction at any moment, without redress, at the will of the king. As in Lower Burma, so also in the new territory, the customs of the people were scrupulously observed and placed on record by the civil officers, and all traditional usage that tended to their advantage was maintained.

The normal condition of the cultivator in

Burma is that of a peasant proprietor, but under the fostering care of English law a race of tenants has sprung up, and the theory of rent is now appreciated by Burman farmers as intelligently as it is in England. In cases where the State is the landlord the average revenue per acre is but one-twelfth of agricultural rents in the English shires, and, while the government does not encourage grants of land in Upper Burma except for direct cultivation, the tendency is for the upper valley to follow the example of the delta region, where the number of tenant farmers increases year by year. These are recruited in part by holders whose land has been taken over in payment of debt, in part by immigrants from Upper Burma, and in part by young men without patrimony. In 1887-8 the number of tenants in Lower Burma was 30,791; four years later it had grown to 46,971, and in the closing year of the century 1,560,942 acres—one-fifth of the whole occupied area—were in the occupation of a prosperous tenant class, with an average holding of fifteen acres apiece. Indeed rack-renting has already begun to appear, and its discouragement is being made the subject of special legislation.

At the time of the annexation British Burma was making an annual contribution to the Indian treasury. It was recognized by the home Government that the task of reducing the new territory to peaceful rule would for the time

being throw new burdens upon the finances of India. Sir John Gorst admitted in the House of Commons, when introducing the Indian Budget in the session of 1888, that it had taken longer and cost more to pacify and to restore order in Upper Burma than had been expected. But the murmurs of the pessimists were silenced by inviting them to study the results of thirty years of British rule in Lower Burma. The growth of the revenue since the acquisition of Rangoon had been stupendous. The following figures tell their own tale :—

1855. 1861. 1871. 1880. 1886.

45 80 123 270 308 lakhs of rupees

The surplus upon 1886 was 90 lakhs (£675,000), or double the gross revenue for 1855, and apart from the military expenditure it has since reached £1,500,000. It has been a grievance on the part of Burma against the Government of India from the beginning that no adequate proportion of its own revenues was allotted for the purpose of productive public improvements.

In its most prosperous moments the Burmese monarchy had never counted upon a larger public revenue than £1,000,000, and during the later half of Thebaw's misrule this sum fell below £900,000. It was estimated at the outset that at least a third of Thebaw's revenue—raised by methods repugnant to British ideals—would perish with his reign.

His Customs duties, transit dues, profits on monopolies, and indefensible exactions were dropped for ever, and of the remainder the new revenue officers were of necessity hampered by the terrorism that prevailed in the outlying districts where dacoity was rife. The inherent vitality of the country, however, was amply shown by the revenue results of the first three years :—

1886.	1887.	1888.
£200,000	£490,000	£700,000

The growth of revenue has been steadily maintained during the decade, and by the end of the century Upper Burma contributed to the gross revenue of the province no less than £950,000.

One of the most creditable acts of the reign of Mindon Min was a piece of financial reform worthy of a British Chancellor of the Exchequer. Indeed, it is permissible to believe that the level-headed Oriental sought to emulate the achievements of William Ewart Gladstone, to whom he sent the fifteen-string order of the Salwe,—a sort of Burmese Garter, the same order as that presented by his envoy, in 1872, to Edward VII himself. Mindon's new tax, called the thathameda, was a household tax, and was assessed on each village according to the number of households. The village community was jointly responsible for the total sum, and was permitted to vary the individual

assessment according to the relative wealth of each householder. The result was that the poor man paid a few annas, while the wealthy farmer might contribute 30 or 40 rupees. When first imposed the tax averaged three rupees; when the monarchy expired it was ten.

This excellent tax was retained by the British administration, and it produced last year £388,600. In the border districts a nominal tribute of Rs. 2½ is collected, less for revenue purposes than as a visible token of submission, and from start to finish the spirit of the English rule differs so widely from that of the old Burmese kingdom that one cannot wonder to find the Burman of to-day recalling the age of Thebaw, and even the age of Mindon Min, with never a thought of regret.

During the years of maladministration I have shown that the form and method of the native government were a direct incentive to gang-robbery. For years dacoity served as the only liberal profession, and the Burman youth repaired with his "da" to the hill-top or the jungle under pressure of the same public opinion that sends the young bloods of the West into a cavalry regiment. The villagers of tamer ambitions, and those who had given hostages to fortune, were well content to compound with the chiefs of the robber gangs around them by an annual payment in kind, in return for their

protection. And if any churl declined to purchase relief, Bo Hpo Myat sent a gang down into the paddy fields and helped himself.

For the first year or two after the annexation, as this brief sketch of the era of dacoity has already shown, the settlement of the country was hindered by the circumstance that gang-robbery enjoyed a recognized status. Again and again, when the deputy commissioners were touring their districts, they discovered that the villagers continued to pay blackmail as listlessly as ever. It was a weary task to put a backbone into these fatalists. But the English officers were stubborn men. They appointed the best of the local men as Burmese magistrates, and gave them the power to order a whipping, or to sentence up to six months' imprisonment. And year by year they pegged away, until at length the peace-loving Burman came to understand that the English raj* meant justice for the strong, protection for the weak, and one law for all.

These results were not attained without sleepless vigilance on the part of the military and police administration. The English regiments were loyally supported by native troops from India. A military police force was recruited from the Gurkhas, the Sikhs, and other warrior peoples of the Indian peninsula, for, with the exception of the Karens, the races

* *Raj* = rule ; *raja* = ruler (Hind.)

of Burma are the most happy-go-lucky men in all Asia, and useless for the drudgery of patrol and sentry duty. Often working upon poor material, for even at this day one-fifth of the civil police are illiterate, the English officers, under the inspiring example of General Stedman, have achieved prodigies of organization. Their results are comparable with Lord Kitchener's success in creating a stable army out of his raw Egyptian levies. Year by year the expense of the military occupation has been reduced, until now the number of regiments has reached a minimum, and their main duties lie in the remoter frontier tracts. In the summer of 1900 there were only 2,811 English troops in the province, less than thrice that number of native soldiery, and about 10,000 military police.

No organized robber gang remains undispersed, and the number of prisoners working out their sentences for dacoity in the gaols of Burma at the beginning of 1900 was barely a hundred. Let it be added that, out of a total prison population of 17,000, nearly 3,000 were detained during the last year of the century on the score of "bad livelihood," so that the system may be said to combine the function of a jail with that of a casual ward. The jail administration of Burma is a marvel of humanity. In the Insein jail, perhaps the finest in all India, I have seen 2,000 men

weaving hats, twisting ropes, casting metal work, carving furniture, under conditions that many a factory hand in Lancashire or the Black Country might envy. They earn a net income of $3\frac{1}{3}$ lakhs, or an average annual earning of Rs. 25 for each person. With their daily allowance of 40 ounces of rice, fish, vegetables, and salt, they are indulged with an ampler dietary than millions of free Asiatics enjoy. But when to this are added allowances of ngapi* and oil, tamarind and curry powders, British justice cannot be charged with lack of mercy. The spirit of the age is reflected even in the reformatory school, which at the turn of the century was transferred to the Education Department, and the boys, whose chief crime is that of bad up-bringing, are now being taught agriculture and gardening.

The progress of education has been hampered by the tremendous hold upon the people possessed by the Buddhist monasteries. Yet many of these have accepted Government inspection, and have conformed their teaching to Government standards. Twenty years ago, two-thirds of the male population in Lower Burma could read and write, and since that time progress has been made, quietly but efficiently, so that at the end of the century there were 17,050 schools, with 287,987 scholars. The total sum expended on education is already

* See Chapter XI.

25. £1,067,000 per annum, a larger sum than Thebaw's whole revenue. Under the encouragement of liberal grants the number of girls at school increases by many thousands every year, the wild tribes in the Chin and Kachin hills are being encouraged to send their children to schools provided for them, and a college for the sons of the Shan chiefs is another sign of the times.

In no branch of administration is a greater contrast offered between Thebaw's misrule and the English dominion than in the care lavished upon the physical health of the people. The Administration Report for 1899-1900 records the fact that 818,039 patients were treated at the 110 dispensaries established throughout the province. Of these, 1,800 were cases of small-pox, but the number of persons voluntarily vaccinated now reaches half a million, and the serious epidemic by which the delta was ravaged at the end of the century will, one may hope, never recur with the same intensity. Quinine used to be sold in the bazaars, but it lost its reputation when adulteration began. The matter was taken in hand by the government, and no less than 148,384 doses of quinine were sold to the people at the post offices in the year under review. The Countess of Dufferin's hospital in Rangoon has been an object lesson to the motherhood of Burma that is slowly but surely permeating the land, and reforming the usages

of untold centuries. The 6,000 lepers recorded in the census of 1891 were taken in hand, mainly by the Roman Catholic and the Wesleyan missions, with the result that the health of the community has been vastly benefited, while the treatment of the victims themselves, who were formerly deemed the veriest outcasts, is now humane.

With such a record of persistent progress the demand that arose, from the very outset, for an improvement in the status of this largest and most prosperous of the Indian provinces, was at length admitted by the home Government to be irresistible. Already in 1887 Lord Dufferin had proposed that the province should be raised to the dignity of a Lieutenant-Governorship. Sir Charles Crosthwaite, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie who succeeded him, would each have done honour to the higher position, for the one became Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, and the other Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. It was not until the spring of 1897, a decade later, that the Chief Commissioner was at length promoted to the style and dignity of a Lieutenant-Governor, and Burma received at the same time a Legislative Council and a Chief Court of its own.

In that fine spirit of compromise which lies at the back of the administrative genius of Britain throughout the world, the Kinwun Mingyi, Thebaw's veteran chief minister, known

nowadays as the Hon. U Gaung, C.I.E., has, with the Sawbwa of Hsipaw, one of the tributary Shan States, been admitted to this local legislature. It has addressed itself with avidity to the solution of many problems of home rule. The first chief judge of the new court was not a barrister, but a member of the Indian Civil Service, who was chosen, not for his knowledge of the technique of jurisprudence, but for his familiarity with the customs, languages, and mode of thought of the peoples of the province.

Since the new century began a project has been formed for the establishment of a separate political service for Burma. This will enable men to devote themselves to a study of the complex conditions of administration in the Indo-Chinese peninsula, without the disturbance of their life-work that at present occurs while they are liable to be transferred at a moment's notice to another Indian province. The project will have the effect of introducing continuity of service, and will ensure for this vast satrapy—over which Sir Frederick Fryer rules with distinction and prudence—the blessings of a present peace, and the promise of an even more splendid future.

CHAPTER X

THE BUDDHIST FACTOR

RIGHTLY to apprehend the past and the future of Burma, it is necessary to analyze the tremendous power exerted by the Buddhist factor. Not Siam, not Ceylon, not Tartary can rival the purity and majesty of the faith in the teachings of the Lord Buddha as they are propounded to this day by the holy monks who meditate under the shadow of the great world-shrines of Rangoon and Pegu, Mandalay and Prome.

When the Burmese Lent, which coincides with the rainy season, comes to an end, the rejoicings upon the incomparable platform of the Shwe Dagon are shared by earnest pilgrims from every part of the Buddhist East, from Kandy to Korea, from Bangkok to Tibet. For within its golden turret, fashioned in the like-

ness of a rice heap surmounted by a lotus bud, there lies enshrined the spiritual secret of the Burmese race.

At some time or other in his youth every Burman, from prince to peasant, becomes a monk. His retirement from the jungle of the world's passions may be long or short, but to miss this primal necessity of being would be to lose every claim to the respect of his kind. Some there are who enter the monastic state for but a single day, long enough to make one tour of the village street in the attitude of mendicancy, and on the morrow they return to the fleshpots of lay existence. The self-respecting Burman, who has an eye also for the esteem of the maidenhood of his acquaintance, endures the deprivations of life throughout one Lent at least. He marks his return to social joys at the end of it with the greater zest because for him the monastic life was but the means to an end. The long-desired moment when, with the consent of his parents, the Burman in the eagerness of boyhood first enters the monastery as a baptized postulant—with a new, a Buddhist name—is the first of the three red-letter days of his career. The second comes when he takes a bride; the third when he frees himself from the three calamities—evil desire, anger, and ignorance—and attains the holy rest by building a new pagoda of his own.

Some men, however, are well content with

the leisurely seclusion that the monastic life affords. At the worst the ease-loving Burman does not find the turmoil of lay existence arduous, but the monk is relieved even of these casual labours. After a few Lents devoted to a study of the sacred things he reaches the dignity of a "yahan," and enters the noble order of the Yellow Robe. His needs are few. Eight chattels form his sole possessions, as they formed the sole possessions of his Master—a loin cloth, a wrapper for the breast, a robe (all yellow-dyed with jack-tree wood), a red girdle, a needle for repairs, an axe for splitting wood, an earthen pot to receive the alms of the devout, and a filter wherewith to strain his water clear of every living thing. To these custom has prescribed that he should add a palm frond wherewith to shield his eyes from the distracting sight of woman.

At daybreak he strolls slowly down the village, making a mute appeal for food; and when it is thrown into the pot he may give no sign of gratitude, for virtue is its own reward. From noon to sunrise no food may pass his lips, and the long hours of fasting are to be spent in meditation upon the mysteries of being. After ten Lents he may attain the great glory of a "hpongyi," and as such becomes entitled to act as the incumbent of a monastery. When he dies his earthly tabernacle is embalmed for a term

in honey, and at length is burned upon a glittering pyre, amid the excitements of a village festival. For, unlike common men, his princely soul, which for a time came down to earth, has now returned to its heavenly abode. Under the Burmese monarchy the monk was beyond the reach of the civil arm, and although he might be of base-born parentage even the king was prostrate before his saintliness.

Thus it is that the monastic order is enwoven in the very life of the people. The hpongyi is no preacher. He has no mission to exhort the worldly, to console the distressed. He enters the pagoda like meaner worshippers, and men do him reverence, not as a priest, but as a saint who by a life of abnegation has earned the right to a speedier nirvana. Life for him has no anxieties, for a handful of fruit given to a monk of many Lenten earns more merit for the giver than a hospital or school built for meaner folk.

The monastery is fashioned of teak timber, and the number of its roofs marks the sanctity of its occupant. Within its compound there are planted jack-trees and tamarinds, banyans and mangoes, under whose ample shade the disciple of the Buddha passes his days in indolent meditation. In 1891 there were as many as 15,371 monasteries in Burma, occupied by 13,613 hpongyis, 6,668

yahans, and 13,500 novices. Besides these there are nunneries peopled by women who have taken a vow of celibacy—which may terminate at any moment, should they desire to seek the anxious joys of motherhood. The number of these devout women is, however, but a twentieth of the number of monks. Of the sixty-two recluses, in age from sixteen to thirty-nine, who passed the examination in Pali during 1901, only two were women. The gifts of the faithful are always so ample that there is enough and to spare for the simple wants of the mendicant brotherhood. Hence it is that the monastic order becomes a gigantic system of relief. There is no pauperism, and poor laws are quite unknown.

Let it be confessed that the stern simplicity of the recluse life, as planned by the master mind of Gaudama, has yielded in these degenerate days to a laxer rule of conduct. Of the ten Buddhist commandments five are binding upon all men at all times. These are the commands to have a strict respect for life, the property of others, their wives and daughters, truth, and sobriety. Five must be observed by the laity on duty-days and in Lent, but by the monks at every hour. These are the commands to avoid cosmetics, gluttony, certain games, contact with gold and silver, and the use of seats above their station.

Many a pious quibble is responsible for

the relaxation of these virtuous ideals. The yellow robe, for example, should be fashioned out of fragments of discarded cloths, picked up on the roadside, and sewn with the saintly needle; the raiment of the modern monk is made of new silk, ostentatiously torn across the corner and then sewn up again. The monk should eat only what is put into his begging bowl each morning; the contents of the bowl are often flung to the pariah dogs, and the monk sits down to a dainty feast purchased with the monastery funds. The hand may not be soiled with the touch of gold; but if you offer a coin to a hpongyi, what is to prevent his covering the hand that accepts it with a fold of the yellow robe?

The life of the common people centres in the pagoda. This is not a place of worship or a temple, but a relic-shrine, the sacred resting-place of fragments of the Buddha's earthly tenement, of his eight utensils, of golden images of his earthly form, of copies of the sacred law. The Buddhist is an atheist. For him there is no supreme personal Being, and how can he be said to worship even the holy Gaudama when he believes the Lord Buddha to be enjoying the ultimate bliss of effortless non-existence? When, therefore, the Burman repairs on duty-days—the full moon and the new, the eighth day of the crescent orb, the eighth of

the waning—it is to adore the memory of the great teacher of his race, to repeat on bended knee the formulæ of respect, to remind himself of the evanescence of earthly things, to light a candle before the effigy, to glorify the transcendent Presence with the magic fragrance of a lotus lily. No sanctity in the giver enhances the value of the sacrifice. Such merit as is placed to his account in the balance-sheet of his existence is derived from the holiness of its object. Hence it is that the Burman seeks, more and more eagerly as the end of life approaches, to cancel all the demerit of his sublunary career by building a shrine out of his own resources. On the stage of the world he enacts a “pwe” of five acts, in which he acquires health, learning, family, substance, kudos—and the greatest of these is kudos.

Except at the four great pagodas, money lavished upon the repair of a dilapidated shrine brings merit only to its builder. Thus in every village will be seen the curious spectacle of a crowd of desolate ruins standing side by side with modern edifices. Every hamlet, every hillside, every outstanding knoll upon the river bank, every islet, is the site of a pagoda. Usually of brick—there is one above Mandalay of solid stone—these shrines may even be fashioned of sand, of wood, of paper. For in the vast eternity of

nothingness what matter a few paltry centuries of time? Yet Nature deals kindly with these evanescent symbols of devotion, and some of them have not changed their outward form since first they aroused the wonder of sixteenth-century travellers.

The glittering spiracle of gold that guards the southernmost spur of the Pegu hills was already in existence in a ruder form 2,500 years ago, while as yet the Buddha was living upon this earth. Age after age the Shwe Dagon has enshrined the eight sacred hairs which Gaudama sent to Burma for the eternal good of the faithful. Having at first a height of but eighteen cubits, monarch after monarch has lavished treasure upon it, until to-day it lifts its proud head 321 feet above the lofty platform on which it is built, matchless in calm sublimity of form. In the fifteenth century a queen placed over it a hti, or canopy, fashioned of her own weight in gold; in 1774, when it received its present shape, Sinbyushin, the victor of Manipur, set aside £9,000 worth of gold, equal in weight to his own burly form, in order to give the pagoda a coating of gold leaf. Five times during the nineteenth century has this costly integument been renewed, and to this day you may hear the tapping of the hammers of the goldbeaters in their smithy upon the platform, mingling with the droning of the devotees, and with

the tinkle of the entrancing bells upon the summit of Mindon's hti.*

Next in merit-earning power to the building of a pagoda or a rest-house is the giving of a bell. It was the arrogant Bodawpaya himself, the earliest flouter of the power of Britain, who sought to emulate the generous devoutness of his elder brother, Sinbyushin, by erecting a pagoda that should outshine the glories of the Buddhist world. He lived only long enough to raise its foundations, but the huge Mingon bell that was cast by him in 1790, out of ninety tons of metal, still remains as a perpetual memory of his name. It is the mightiest perfect bell in the world, being second in size only to the great cracked bell of Moscow. But it was never hung.

Though but half its weight, the three-toned Ganda, the "sweet-voiced bell" of Rangoon, is not the least of the unique glories of the Shwe Dagon. It was the gift of Tharawadi, the mad javelin-throwing monarch whose rule intervened between that of his brother, who lost Arakan and Tenasserim in the first Burmese war, and that of his son, who lost Pegu in the second campaign. It should be distinguished from the Maha Ganda of Sinbyushin's son, which, although shorter and no heavier, is nearly twice as thick. One sentence from the diffuse self-laudatory

* See Chapter V.

legend chiselled upon Tharawadi's bell will illustrate the inner aim and purpose of bell-giving as formulated in the mind of the devout disciple of the Master :—

“For all these meritorious acts may I become a Buddha, able to save men, nats, and Bramas ; in various existences before final extrication may I become only kings, able to confer happiness on others.”

The use of a pagoda bell is to enable the devotee to call the neighbourhood to witness that he has been performing the sacred acts of his religion, and to enable them to participate in his merit. This he does by beating the ground and then the bell with an antelope horn, and in this land of a myriad enchantments few sounds can rival the sweetness of the reverberations thus aroused in these massive cones of pendent music.

The Buddhist faith is inherent in the Burmese race ; it is enwrought in the very texture of the Burmese mind. The Burman regards with a tolerant gaze the efforts of the missionaries to change his creed. He is nothing if not urbane. It is his unfaltering belief that in the next existence the good-tempered Englishman will rise to be a Burman. From earliest infancy the child haunts the pagoda shrine, and almost as soon as he can toddle—as soon, indeed, as he begins to clothe his body—he repairs to the monastery

school in order to begin the furnishing of his mind. His earliest efforts are bestowed upon the acquisition of the alphabet, the "great basket of learning," and from this he passes on to the Ten Commandments, the formulæ and aspirations to be repeated at the shrine, the rules of the yellow robe, and other sacred matters. Of the rudiments of earthly knowledge, as understood by Western schoolboys, he is curiously ignorant.

Yet, as I have said, two-thirds of the male population of Burma can at least read and write, and even three in every hundred of their wives and sisters. Compare this with the illiteracy of India as a whole, where, perhaps, one man in ten and one woman in three hundred have learned the alphabet! The Burmans, in fact, are the most cultured race in the Orient. In the autumn of 1901 the "Mandalay Society for Promoting Buddhism" determined to open a school at Hsipaw, in the Northern Shan States, whereat the Shan language as well as the English Bible and the Buddhist scriptures will be taught. Yet a change is coming over the spirit of the monastic schools. Some of them earn £100 apiece in government grants for teaching class-subjects, and it is not without significance that upon the back of the European exercise book, which now replaces the tiny blackboard "slate" of the old dispensa-

tion, there is printed the multiplication table of Western learning.

Of the labours of the Christian missions one cannot speak here at length. Judson civilized the Karens, as Calvert the peoples of Fiji. But so far as Buddhist Burma is concerned their time has not yet come. That it will come cannot be doubted, for the reason that, in the conflict between the religion of altruism and the religion of self-absorption, altruism must win. Thebaw, who himself was a pupil of the S.P.G. mission in Mandalay, dreamed of a mighty university, where English, French, German, and Italian should be taught in the same classrooms as Burmese, Pali, and Sanskrit. But when asked to endow it he shrugged his shoulders and offered 100 rupees a month. The near future will witness the foundation of a university for Burma, but its funds will come from the British power. Already there are signs that the young Burman in the towns understands the solid advantages of a Western education, and the barrister who has been to London, or even to Calcutta, is a more magnetic example than the most learned sadaw or archbishop. The disintegration of Buddhism has not yet begun, and one can scarcely doubt that its lease has many years to run. But when its power is weakened the solvent will come from the schools in which new Burma is being taught and trained.

CHAPTER XI

PADDY AND TEAK

IT is the good fortune of Burma to have been dowered by Nature with an opulent vegetation. The country's wealth is inexhaustible, for it is renewed, year after year, by the unpaid labour of the sun and the rain. From the beginning of its story Burma has been one of the chief rice granaries and one of the greatest timber plantations of the East. And so it will continue to the end.

The delta of the Irawadi is one vast paddy field. From every knoll, every pagoda platform, you look forth upon a landscape of billowy rice-stalks, and the far horizon fades away into shadowy mists of green. When the rain-sodden land begins to emerge, after the first few weeks of river-subsidence, the cultivator brings out his primitive harrow

and gives it a gentle scratching. The seedlings, which have sprung up like magic on the higher ground reserved as a nursery, are transplanted to the fields, often by the work of the women and children, while Jack Burman lolls on a hillock and watches the scene through the indolent smoke of a green cheroot. In a few days the task is turned over to the willing hands of Nature, and by the end of the year immigrant harvesters from Upper Burma drop down the river and do Jack's work for him, accepting his risk of snake-bite—in exchange for a share of the crop. Do you wonder that the Burmese farmer is a leisure-loving animal, when life has no burdens, and energy would be an unwarrantable interference with Nature's prerogative?

The Burman need never starve. If he tumbles into debt it is not the fault of his environment, but of his improvidence or the oppression of his rulers, a factor that has been lifted out of his life for ever now that he enjoys the blessings of British rule and British justice. Famine is not a frequent episode in his history. At the end of the thirteenth century, as we have seen, the land was exhausted, but only because its unrivalled opulence had been lavished upon the building of pagodas. Every year the rice crop alone is sufficient to provide every human being in

the province with an average daily supply of 4 lb., or nearly twice as much as he could possibly eat. This leaves a large margin for exchange with other lands, and there need never come a single season when Manchester will not be able to sell him and his women-folk all the bright clothes that they can possibly wear. The Burman has no eye to the future. An extra bushel per acre does not induce him to add to his estate, or to open an account at the bank. It is converted into rupees, which find their way into the longyi—the drapery—bazaar, or, less worthily, into the sleeve of John Chinaman, who is always ready to oblige him with “a little flutter” upon his angalon—his six-animal board. The Burman is the most inveterate gambler in the world.

He is richer now than ever. The peacock rupees which Mindon got made for him in Paris, bearing the inscription, “The Golden Royal Country,” were not so easily won as the silver discs now minted by the million in Bombay. When Rangoon was seized in the mid-century the rice trade was in its infancy. Small quantities were bought up by English merchants for exportation, but the impossibility of cleaning it on the spot by Burmese labour kept the industry within narrow bounds. Then arose a generation of hard-headed Britons who determined to abandon

the uncertain labour of man for the more docile aid of machinery. In 1867, the year in which Albert Fytche won a commercial treaty from Mindon Min, there were three steam rice-mills in Rangoon. Five years later there were twenty-six. To-day there are 141 factories, mostly for cleaning rice and sawing timber, in Lower Burma alone. The effect upon the prosperity of the country was tremendous. The price of paddy was run up, and the mills worked day and night during the season, in order to fill the rice tramps with their heavy freights for Europe.

The feverish conditions under which the industry was exploited in the early days, and the difficulty of regulating the supply from season to season, meant many a headache for the managers of the rival houses, some of whom attempted to forestall their neighbours by advancing the whole value of the crop before the seed was scattered on the ground. There were many ups and downs ; yet in the long run large profits were made, and the output increased. In 1892-3 a combination was effected with the object of ruling the price to be paid to the cultivators, and of controlling the market in Europe as well. The monopolists used their power with scant scruple, and amassed huge illicit gains at the expense of the people, many of whom were ruined. For two years the price realized by

paddy was barely two-thirds of its normal value. The effect upon the import trade was disastrous, and was felt for many a long day. Public opinion ran strongly against this ruthless exercise of the power of the purse, and the experiment has not been repeated. The trust had in its favour the law of India, that no excuse should be taken for the non-payment of revenue upon agricultural land. The cultivators were forbidden to remove their crops before paying the rent, and the money for this purpose was usually advanced by the Indian money-lenders of the "chetty" caste. The chetties insisted upon repayment, and when therefore the millers made their ruinous offer, the growers had no option but to accept. The Government has made such an operation impossible in future by enacting that, at the discretion of the commissioners of districts, revenue need not be collected when due. The Burmans have also taken things into their own hands by erecting huge granaries all over the country, in which the paddy is stored until the millers offer suitable prices. In various ways, therefore, some of the fortunes made during those few months of summer madness have been gradually frittering away again.

The output continues to expand, and the rice production of Burma has not yet reached its zenith. Even in Upper Burma, where the

cultivation of rice is hampered by the necessity for tedious irrigation, the area under paddy is growing. It will grow still more when the Mandalay canal, opened by the viceroy in 1901, and the Shwebo canal, which will not be ready until 1905, bear the burden of irrigating large tracts of arable land. Here is a comparison showing the growth of paddy land during the last decade :—

	1888-9.	1899-1900.
Lower Burma ...	4,067,606 ...	6,277,678 acres
Upper Burma ...	1,605,936 ...	1,818,962 acres

In round numbers the area of the province, according to the Survey of India, is 100,000,000 acres. Of this aggregate 55,000,000 are not available for cultivation, and one-tenth each are occupied by forests and growing crops. There still remains a fourth, at present lying waste, which is fit for cultivation. In other words, the arable produce of Burma is capable of being extended by two and a half times its present crop. Hence the local administration will have no problem of population to face, at any rate for the remainder of the new century.

The rice crop of Upper Burma, however, is not likely for many a long year, if at all, to be adequate for its needs. There has been a persistent importation from the lower division across the frontier in the past, and this circumstance was not without its influence upon the political situation, as it developed during the

years of Thebaw's misrule. Under the political unity introduced by the British *régime* the interchange has proceeded without hindrance, and subject only to the operation of economic laws. The situation towards the close of the century was abnormal because of the demand created in central India by the failure of the crops there. Yet the vitality of the export trade in Burma rice is sufficiently shown in the following figures, taken from the latest Administration Report:—

	Europe and America. Tons.	India, China, and Straits. Tons.
1890	749,564 ...	430,079
1895	801,450 ...	450,999
1900 (10 months)	708,804 ...	1,197,934
	Upper Burma. Tons.	Total. Tons.
1890	53,838 ...	1,233,481
1895	25,447 ...	1,277,896
1900 (10 months)	* ...	1,906,738

Cargo rice now contains one-fifth of its bulk left in the husk, the other four parts being cleaned or husked. In this form it is still often called five-part rice. The advantage of the mixture is that the grains in husk act as protective buffers to the whole, and prevent the fracture of the cleaned rice which otherwise occurs in the hold of the steamer. They also aid the ventilation of the mass during transit, and thus prevent fermentative mischief. The decortica-

* Not yet available.

tion of the rice grain for the Western markets is probably carried to an extreme. Rice is not a popular food with the British matron, partly because she seldom knows how to cook it properly, but also because white rice is deprived of the constituents provided by nature to make it a valuable food for temperate races. The Burmese method of cleaning rice, whereby some part of the outer pellicle is retained, is physiologically sound, and the Burman's ineffable disdain for steamer rice is not without reason. True to the first Buddhist commandment, he does not take animal life for purposes of food, and his cattle are reared as beasts of burden. Indeed, the principle is carried to an extreme of logic, for the drinking of milk would be deemed a sinful act, aimed at the life of the calf. It is only in the towns that the modern Burman, aping the self-indulgence of the European, is recreant to the traditions of his fathers, and permits himself the use of milk.

The nitrogenous elements of food, without which rice of itself cannot serve for the sustenance of man, are provided for the most part by the addition of fish. These creatures, be it observed, are not slain. They are taken out of the water, and if they should chance to die in consequence, how can the fisherman be held responsible? Thus the demands of religion and of the carnal appetite are alike appeased. The Burman will eat anything that swims in the river,

from a sea-slug to a shrimp ; all—except only the alligator—is fish that comes to his net. Ma Shwe Mi is a dainty cook, and her prawn curry and rice, *more Birmanico*, is a dish for the gods. Out of the need for preserving some part of the fish fauna, for use when fresh fish is out of season, there has arisen the important industry which concerns itself with the preparation of ngapi. This is a fish paste, made after the manner of anchovy sauce, but with well-matured flavours of its own, and during the first year of Thebaw's reign the quantity that crossed the frontier into Upper Burma reached the astonishing total value of £200,000. The English trader has not been slow to exploit this aspect of Burmese taste, and there is a large importation of tinned sardines and flying fish from Western Europe.

The 6,300,000 acres of rice land in Lower Burma form 92 per cent. of the whole cultivated area. Of the remainder, 60,000 acres are allotted to other food-grains and pulses, a like area to oil-seeds and tobacco, in equal moieties, and 10,000 acres each are occupied by sugar-cane and cotton. Under the fostering care of the immigrant Chinese no less than a third of a million acres are laid out as orchards and kitchen gardens, and the delta may yet become one of the pine-apple nurseries of the world. In Upper Burma the conditions that prevail favour the cultivation of the

hardier forms, and the paddy land is but one half of the entire area under cultivation. The wheat fields already cover 16,000 acres, and the crop is steadily growing in importance. Other food-grains and oil-seeds together occupy an area equal to that under paddy. There is a little sugar and indigo, tobacco occupies nearly 40,000 acres, and cotton four times as much. Even tea is collected from 1,343 acres, and there are those who say that Shan tea is yet destined to oust Assam or Ceylon blends from the tea-table of the dainty Englishwoman. Many of these cultivations are the outcome of the brief generation that has elapsed since the British occupation of Mandalay, and the arable region of Upper Burma will one day be quadrupled.

In Upper and Lower Burma equal areas, about 5,000,000 acres each, have been placed under the administration of the Forest Department. Much of this huge resource of timber is economically worthless, but it includes several species that are of serious moment both to the Orient and to the Occident. Of these teak is easily first, for the white ant does not attack it, and iron nails driven into it do not rust. The story of teak, as we have seen, is bound up with the political fortunes of the land.

The exploitation of Burmese timber began in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

Saw-pits were erected by British enterprise at the river mouths, and the logs, after being roughly squared, were made available for exportation. With the aid of imported Chinese labour, shipbuilding yards also were established, and before the age of steam many sea-going craft were turned out in the Burmese ports. The introduction of the steel saw gradually changed the face of the country, and gave wood a still larger place in the religious architecture of Buddhist Burma. As in other directions, so in this, Nature was bidden to lend her hospitable aid, and the transport of the felled trunks to the river banks was entrusted to an army of trained elephants, without whom many forests in Burma would still be untouched.

The logs are tumbled into the stream, and rafted together for the long voyage down to the coast. The large raft has its thatched house, and the foresters spend many a long week in idle contentment, as the swift waters, fed from the far-off slopes of the Himalayan spurs, carry this timber cargo noiselessly down. The Bombay Burma Trading Corporation was the first concern of importance to secure concessions from the old Burmese monarchy for the winning of timber, and it set about the task with the energy characteristic of the Briton in the East. Its elephant population sometimes reaches the large total of 1,500, and

each has its human attendant. The best tuskers are worth Rs. 4,000 apiece, and in freedom would live for nearly a hundred years. But their work is arduous, and in the timber yards on the coast they more rapidly wear out their lives.

The teak tree attains a marketable size in sixty years, and at that age it possesses an average girth of 7 feet. At the end of its first twenty years of life it should have a height of 60 feet. When a teak forest is fully matured there may be as many as sixty trees within an area of an acre, yielding 3,000 cubic feet of timber, and with the thinnings this represents a mean annual average yield of 47 feet per acre. Native teak grows in patches of what Mr. Kurz calls the dry mixed forest, whose principal constituent is a deciduous bamboo, under whose kindly shade the sappy timbers spend their delicate infancy. It is doubtful whether the plan of re-planting teak in solid masses will yield the same results, and the whole problem of the conservation of the Burma forests is one that demands the utmost care, and skill, and study.

The supply of "pyinkado," the invaluable iron-wood with which part of the streets of Rangoon are paved, and which is invaluable as a railway sleeper, is already failing in some areas, so much so that the machinery now got out from home is built for cutting smaller trunks than before. Maulmain itself, which depends for its very existence upon the timber wealth that

is floated down the Salwin river, may become in the future as desolate as Martaban, unless some sound rule of reforestation can be devised. The strain upon the teak supply is not yet felt to any extent, but it is probable that the mature trees which are at present the object of the timber cutter are being worked out at a greater rate than the annual replenishment from younger trees. The same experience applies to the *Acacia catechu*, the source of the invaluable catch dye. The superintendent of the Chin hills reported in 1901 that it would be advisable to give the catch tracts in his territory a rest for the time being, and to suspend the grant of licences.

The principle upon which leases were granted by Mindon Min was that a fixed revenue should be paid upon each forest tract, and the lessees were at liberty to take away all they could secure during the season. The place which these leases had in the diplomatic events that culminated in the annexation has already been described. The Corporation claimed to have received verbal promises from the old king, Mindon, that their leases would in due course of time be renewed. The specific gravity of green teak is a fifth heavier than water, that of dry or dead teak a fifth lighter. The readiest means of destroying the life of the tree is to "girdle" the bark a few feet from the ground, and in two or three years the trunk is ready to

be felled. By this process it is saved from the deterioration, caused by the attacks of animal and vegetable parasites, which would fall to its lot if it lay prone upon the ground.

The Corporation enjoyed the right under their contracts of girdling selected trees at their own discretion, and it was no part of their duty to replant. Three years after the transfer of power to the British administration an agreement was drawn up, under which licences were granted to the Corporation to work, as contractors to the Government, the forests of which they held the leases.* These expire at varying dates ending in 1904. Under the new rules all girdling is done under the sanction or by the direct initiative of the forest officers, and a royalty varying from Rs. 15 to Rs. 30 per ton is paid as revenue. The sum so obtained in 1889-1900 was 80 lakhs. Similar agreements were entered into with the chief Burman lessees, and it is anticipated that when the present covenants expire the Government will resume to a larger extent the responsibility of felling the timber, which will then be sold to the timber interest at rates that will doubtless produce an ampler return for the local exchequer. During the year under review 40,000,000 cubic feet of timber and fuel were extracted from the

* Their dividend for 1899-1900 was 30 per cent.

forest area, and the export of teak timber alone reached 272,000 tons.

Two experiments of some practical moment are in progress during these early months of the new century. One consists in the plantation of rubber-bearing trees in all likely areas, from the northernmost to the southernmost limits of the province. Another is due to the enthusiasm of certain experts who are of opinion that the paper supply of the world can be increased by the use of bamboo shoots, such as cover the hill-sides with delicate verdure during the middle of the rains. The technical difficulties to be overcome are not to be despised, but the local government is ever ready to grant concessions for the practical trial of every project that may add to the vegetable wealth of the province. A Burma Forest School was established in 1898, and the next half-century may easily witness in the province many a romance of cultivation, such as that which gathers about the story of the introduction of the cinchona tree into south India, or of the clover into New Zealand.

CHAPTER XII

“GOLD, AND A MULTITUDE OF RUBIES”

AMONG the travellers' tales that were brought to Europe in the fifteenth century, not the least marvellous were those which centred upon a limestone plateau that lies seventy miles or so to the north of Ava. Within an area twenty-six miles long, and half as broad, is situate the richest ruby tract in the world. From three narrow valleys, at a height of 5,000 feet above the level of the Bay of Bengal, there have come the great crimson stones that were a symbol of the barbaric splendour of the monarchs of the Orient. The throne of the Great Mogul was fabled to be adorned with 108 rubies, of which the smallest had a weight of 100

carats, and the largest were twice as heavy. Kublai Khan offered the value of a city in exchange for one, but the offer was made in vain. Whether the great ruby—a bastard spinel—which was given to the Black Prince, was worn by the English king at Agincourt, and is now a part of the State Crown of the seventh Edward, came from the Burma mines, history has left no proof.

The Shan miners, who for centuries worked this region, have been rewarded by the finding of many stones of great value, and the Alompra kings jealously guarded their prerogative. During the reign of Mindon Min the annual revenue from the ruby mines sometimes reached the sum of £15,000, in addition to the large stones, which were supposed to come into the royal treasury intact. In 1855 Colonel Phayre sought permission for Dr. Oldham, the geologist who accompanied his mission, to visit Mogok, but the request was declined. In 1875 Mindon sent two rubies to London, one of which fetched £10,000, and the other, after being cut down to 39 carats, realized £20,000. There is little-doubt that the exploitation of the ruby tract was one of the concessions which the French expected to secure as the result of their intrigues with Thebaw. The annexation was scarcely accomplished before the Indian Government

was approached by an Anglo-Indian firm, acting on behalf of a powerful Paris syndicate, with proposals for a concession of the ruby mines. The rent which they offered, largely in excess of the revenue derived by the Burmese king, was a tempting bait.

By the summer of 1886, Mr. Streeter, Jr., was already prospecting in the Mogok valley, in the interests of a group of London financiers. He promptly outbid the French, and warded off a project that might have brought about a renewal of the international troubles. A concession for seven years, at a rental of 4 lakhs—£30,000—was granted to the English company, and in a couple of years the old native workings were being explored once more, with the aid of modern machinery and modern methods. The rights of the native miners were strictly respected, but the company enjoyed the right of purchasing their finds. For a time the results were disappointing, but electricity was called to the rescue, and the shareholders to-day have no reason to regret their enterprise. The traditional method was to drive bamboo-timbered shafts through the alluvial bed down to the ruby earth, and to lift the washable stuff in baskets poised upon bamboo balance-poles. On the hill-slopes long trenches were cut through the alluvial wash, while in chosen spots covered mines

were dug out, and even the limestone was quarried. The conversion of water power into electrical energy has not only solved the old problem of drainage, but has enabled work to proceed at a greatly increased rate during the season. In the spring of 1893 a stone of the value of £1,150 was found, but since that time larger rubies have come to light, such as one worth £10,000 found in 1895. At the end of the century the Burma Ruby Mines Company, whose concession was renewed with a more moderate royalty,* had secured stones to the value of about £93,000, and were in possession of a stone weighing 77 carats, out of which a fine ruby of 29 carats was cut, of the estimated value of £5,000. The dividend declared in 1900 was $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; in 1901 it reached the high level of $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

It is the ambition of every Burmese woman to be the possessor, not of those "lips of knowledge" which King Solomon preferred, but of "gold, and a multitude of rubies." Ma Pyu's personal jewellery is invariably of gold, and it is not until the end approaches that she gives her armlets, as an act of devotion, to be beaten out into a patch of gold-leaf for the adornment of the pagoda shrine. Yet most of the glittering gauds wherewith

* In 1899 it was fixed at 2 lakhs, and 30 per cent. of the profits.

the tasteful maiden bedecks her wrists are of gold brought from afar. The metal is wrought by skilled goldsmiths who, with little more than a hammer and an awl, fashion armlets of massive design and a quaint beauty of their own. On the deck of any Irawadi steamer you may encounter a peasant girl whose whole estate is gathered into a handy "pa," or covered basket. Yet upon her arms she may carry half a dozen bangles of solid gold, each worth 100 rupees at the lowest computation.

Alluvial gold has been washed out of the river banks from immemorial time, but no large fortune was ever made by the gold seekers. It was one of the earliest discoveries in Tenasserim, and the gold dust of Tavoy has always been prized, because it contains a tenth part of silver. At Kyaukpazat, in the Wuntho district, the Burmese worked the outcrop of an auriferous reef to a depth of 10 feet, and then abandoned the task for lack of tools. In 1894 a prospector came upon their diggings, and proved the existence of a vein 240 feet long, a white and banded quartz whose yield averaged 14 dwt. to the ton. A 10-stamp battery and a small cyanide plant have been set up, and during the last year of the century the mine yielded 1,200 oz. of gold. Other veins have been discovered in the vicinity by a survey officer, and the field seems destined to afford excellent results.

The mining of tin in Burma is of similar dimensions. From Victoria Point, the southernmost limit of the province, a path has been made to the town of Maliwun, on a tiny river which forms the boundary between Mergui and Siam. All is mangrove swamp, except where a Chinese raja has turned the Siamese side of the stream into a nutmeg garden. The district abounds in tinstone, and an output of 50 tons is secured year by year, by the primitive device of smelting the ore in a mud furnace. The blast is obtained by means of a piston fitted into a hollow tree, and the piston is worked by human engines, who are relieved at intervals of an hour or two by their comrades. Attempts to compete with the extreme economy of the native processes, which yield 68 per cent. of block tin, have hitherto failed. But the effort is to be renewed, and a tract of 400 acres has been leased by the government of Burma to a European firm, who propose to erect hydraulic machinery for the purpose of securing larger results.

The mineral resources of Burma, indeed, are still virtually untouched. In the far north, upon the borderland of China, there are deposits which have received attention from the Chinese miners for ages, and the time is coming when they will attract British capital. In the Myitkyina district,

the present furthest limit of the railway that climbs the Irawadi valley, jade has been extracted throughout an immemorial past. The frontier tribes, sometimes to the number of a thousand hands in a single season, quarry this famous greenish stone, which forms the indispensable foundation of Chinese jewellery. There was a time when jadestone used to pass through the seaports of Lower Burma to the value of £70,000 per annum. In 1898 the product reached a total of 100 tons, but in the following year the disturbed state of the Manchu power led to a shrinkage of the output by half. As much as 6 tons of amber are mined in the same neighbourhood in the course of the season, and tourmaline, which has a steady market in China, is produced in the Mong Mit State.

The Letkokpiu colliery already reaches an annual output of 8,000 tons, and there are coal-bearing areas in the upper Chindwin valleys and in the Shan States which only await the advent of the railway to become available for working. Half a century ago Dr. Helfer reported upon the presence of immense coal-fields in the Mergui district, and in 1890 trial pits were sunk from which coal was mined that burned satisfactorily in the Government launch. The region probably requires only a little encouragement to be properly examined by British capital. A licence has

been granted to the Burma Ruby Mines Company for the mining of plumbago, which may yet become a formidable rival to the product of Ceylon.

In 1899 the total quantity of salt put upon the market was 70,000 tons, and the salt revenue reached £100,000. Of this quantity one-third only was of local manufacture, one-third was imported from Germany, and about one-fourth from the United Kingdom. The Government find the task of collecting the revenue from the local output to be rather onerous, and have permitted themselves to be tempted by the facility with which the salt duty is collected at the Custom house quays from the import houses. It has accordingly been determined to raise the local salt revenue to an appreciable extent, with the result that the native industry will be affected and the foreign trade directly benefited.

But this hasty survey of the inorganic wealth of Burma would be imperfect if no mention were made of its prolific wells of oil. At Yenangyaung, an Irawadi village situate midway between Mandalay and Prome, the hill-top is dotted with hundreds of iron structures that mark the presence of tube-wells. Under the name of Rangoon oil the petroleum resources of Burma were the earliest to receive attention, and their importance was realized by the old monarchy,

under which the earth-oil region was treated as a royal treasure not less precious than the ruby tract itself. Mindon Min had 200 wells of his own, besides an equal number in private hands, of whose profits he did not hesitate to exact a full share. The methods of drawing up the oil from the native timbered shafts were primitive to a degree. Coolie women seized the rope to which the full earthen jar was attached, and walked slowly down the path into the valley. When the jar was at the top it was emptied, and was gently lowered away by the simple device of signalling to the dusky Jill to walk up the hill again. By this means a daily output of 37 gallons per well was secured.

The oil is very thick and viscid, and owing to the vast depth from which it ultimately comes—computed by Dr. Oldham at 2,870 feet—it loses many of its volatile constituents before reaching the surface, and accordingly contains in solution no less than 14 per cent. of solid paraffin. The oil region is close to a group of mud volcanoes, into whose turgid craters a pasty oil-bearing earth perpetually bubbles, the scenery being, in the moonlight, not dissimilar from that of the geysir region of south-west Iceland. When the temperature of the air falls below 80 degrees the oil not infrequently becomes solidified. Hence it is not suited for use as an illuminant, and although it is used in Burma largely by

the native population, it demands the use of a lamp with a specially constructed burner.

On the Arakan coast there is a second source of petroleum which differs from the other in offering a light limpid oil, obtained direct from the rocky reservoir at a moderate depth, an oil, therefore, which still retains for the most part its volatile constituents. The total output of crude oil for all Burma in 1899-1900 was more than 32,000,000 gallons, this being treble the quantity extracted only five years before. The bulk of this is brought down the river in huge steel flats to Rangoon, where much of it is refined in two factories that together constitute the largest oil and candle works in the world. Here burning oil is refined for the Straits Settlements, paraffin wax for the United Kingdom, and candles for burning at the pagodas, the output of these being sometimes as much as 1,500 cases a day. The statistics of the mineral oil export for 1899-1900 show a total shipment of 2,300 tons of paraffin wax, of which 92 per cent. went to Liverpool and Glasgow; and 1,300,000 gallons of liquid oil, of which 98 per cent. went to Penang and Singapore. The industry is still in its infancy, and when once the lack of volatility is overcome, Burma oil will become a formidable rival to the petroleum productions of the Caspian region, if not of Pennsylvania itself.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MINOR RACES

THROUGH all the ages of her history the destinies of Burma have been controlled by lowland peoples. The plainlands of the Irawadi, and the low-lying strips that fringe the coast, have served as the arena alike of strife and of peace. If we except the half million of immigrant settlers from India, China, and Europe, the native-born population numbered by the census of 1891 reached a total of seven millions.* No fewer than six millions were Burmese and Talaings, men who lost in the lowland valleys the harder characteristics which they inherited from their Mongoloid ancestry on the Central Asian steppes.

* The Census return for 1901 is: Lower Burma, 5,371,328; Upper Burma, 3,849,833; total, 9,221,161.

Of these the Talaings were doubtless the earlier to arrive. Fair of countenance, broad of face, thick-set of limb, they recall their Tartar origin more fully than the dusker, lither, oval-faced Burmans, who are apt to claim that Aryan as well as Mongol blood courses through their veins. The Talaings were for long ages the race who held the delta, but when Alaungpaya and his brood overran Pegu, they were the victims of severe political measures, which caused them to welcome the English with open arms during the campaign of 1824-6. When the British conquerors retired from Pegu large masses of the Talaings went with them into Tenasserim, and to-day seven-eighths of their total number are still found in that division, which has enjoyed the longest spell of British rule. The Talaing tongue is still spoken in the villages between Amherst and Maulmain, and is still taught in the monastery schools by the lax yahans, who drive their own bullock carts, farm their own glebes, smoke cheroots in public, and drink afternoon tea. These lowland Celts, so to speak, are destined to be absorbed into the dominant race. Yet they are still a racial force, for their numbers reach a half million, and, although their language may be forgotten, their physical influence will endure in the new ethnic developments of the future.

It is, however, the true Burman who must ever remain the primary stock of the province. Impulsive, excitable, callous and yet good-humoured, predatory by instinct, peaceable only by force of circumstance, thriftless, of varying moods, the Burman lacks the robust temperament of hardier peoples. His virtues are hot-house virtues; his vices are the vices of the tropics. He has no sense of method, of punctuality, of discipline. He strikes work on the impulse of the moment, is useless as a sentry, provoking as a policeman, and unreliable as a factory worker.

Happily he is surrounded by other ethnic elements whose union with his own is strengthening his fibre, and producing a strong permanent people. Of these the most vital are the Karens, who numbered 330,000 in the census of 1872, and had doubled their population within the next twenty years. Their clan divisions are too complex to find a place in this survey, but a rough generalization distinguishes the white from the red Karens, this nomenclature being derived from the colour not of their skin but of their tribal dress. The Sgao and the Pwo clans, whom some facile writers call the Burmese and the Talaing Karens, form the bulk of the peasant populations of the three great lower valleys. Submissive, loyal, tractable, they make up in plod for what they lack in astuteness. They

are not Buddhists, but preserve the primal faith in guardian spirits, to be appeased by sacrifice, which also peeps out from beneath the Buddhist vaneer of the neighbour races. They have a traditional belief in a supreme Being, a belief which they seem to have brought with them across the great desert of sand that lies between their far northern home and this southern land of exile. It was this predisposition to the main doctrine of the Christian faith that paved the way for the triumph won by the American Baptist Mission, a triumph so emphatic that to-day there are 500 parishes of Christianized Karens, each supporting its own church and pastor, its school and schoolmaster.

The Bghai clan has its chief habitat in the hill-country east of the Salwin, in the neighbourhood of Taungngu. It includes the two families of white Karens whom the Americans distinguish as the Pant Bghai and the Tunic Bghai, but it also includes the truculent, ferocious red Karens, whose account of themselves is that they are the remnant of a Chinese army that flowed southward about six centuries ago. The hill tribes produce a cereal crop by the wasteful device of the taungya clearing. The lowermost trees of the hill slope are slightly notched, and the notching becomes deeper as the slope is ascended, until the uppermost row is cut

completely through. The fall of these trees carries down by their sheer gravitation the row beneath, and the weight of this huge mass suffices to snap off the less deeply notched trunks below them. The series falls with ever added impetus to the foot of the hill, where the trees are broken down by mere brute force of timber, and need no notching. The clearing thus made is burnt, and the ash serves as a natural fertilizer for the hardy crops. The farmers move on to another timber patch during the following season, and the taungya clearing of one year becomes the desolate waste land of the next.

The red Karens, who give their name to the district of Karenni, carry their mountain homes up to a height of 7,000 feet. Unlike the wandering taungya clearers, they inhabit permanent villages, which are stockaded in the Burmese fashion. Divided into East and West Karenni, their petty chieftains have maintained internecine feuds for ages, and it is one of the practical results of the labours among them of zealous missionaries that the bitterness of these border quarrels has been greatly allayed. On these uplands the jungle is not dense, and Nature has combined with their own industry to give the red Karens a home free from many of the defects of the miasmatic plains. The sub-temperate climate favours spade cultiva-

tion. The dandelion and the violet may be encountered as prolific denizens of the clearings, and in many a Karen garden-plot are to be discerned American flowers, introduced by the home-loving missionaries from the United States. The people invest their savings in elephants, and every man strives to possess a horse.

It was indeed their skill in the saddle that led the Government to turn its attention to them as a source of supply for a much-needed troop of mounted infantry police. Already in 1887 a widespread conspiracy, to burn all the towns in one district and to murder the Europeans, was frustrated by the promptitude of the loyal Karens. During certain seasons of the year the Karen battalion has been able to do work in the jungle for which the English garrison and the native Indian regiments were alike unfitted. At the end of the century, however, they lost the confidence of their leaders as a separate force, because of a disgraceful riot in which several English officers were wounded during the uncontrollable passion of the moment. Six men were convicted, three Karen officers and a large number of their men were dismissed the service, and the various companies of the Karen battalion are now units in the general police system. With these steadying influences around them they are still capable of doing invaluable work.

Unlike the Karens, the Taungthus, who were found to number 40,000 ten years ago, are a vanishing race. Short, swarthy, strong-jawed, blue-trousered, they are essentially wild men of the hills. They call Thahton their home—that Thahton which was perhaps the earliest settlement made by Indian migrants on the coast of the Gulf of Martaban, the city whereat Asoka's missionaries landed, to which Buddaghosa brought the earliest copies of the sacred books. They are an interesting race, and in their northern home, the new Thahton they have made for themselves within the rugged heart of Shanland, they have intermingled with the stronger people, and the fusion will one day lead to their ethnic undoing.

But of all these tributary peoples the most potent are the Shans. Their place in the history of Burma has already been sketched in short outline. Just as the Talaings and the Burmese followed the course of the Irawadi, and of the Arakan Yomas that guard its western watershed, so the Shans filled up the rockier valleys of the Salwin and the Mekong. They had their centuries of empire, and ever formed a guardian race to protect the ease-loving Burmans from the encroaching energy of the peoples of western China. But they lacked the docile solidarity without which empire is an unattainable dream, and for the

most part their story is one of feudatory tenure and internal dissension. To-day the peoples of the Shan States own allegiance either to China, Burma, or Siam, and during the last century there were times when they purchased the right to occupy their mountain fastnesses only by the timid device of paying tribute to two contending overlords.

Mindon Min, whose power as a ruler they gladly recognized, received an annual tribute from the Burmese Shan States of 20 lakhs; before Thebaw was deposed the Shan revenue derived by his treasury had fallen to one lakh. After the annexation the British officers recognized their responsibility towards the tributary states, and it was not long before the discovery was made that the country had been ruined by a generation of oppression and misrule. The power of the chiefs was established on a footing of good order, and our civil administrators were less anxious to exact revenue than to re-establish the petty governments upon the firm basis of a stable peace.

The Shan tribes and their affinities are the most numerous of any within the south-east peninsula of Asia. There are 200,000 of them in Burma alone. They are the root-stock of the Laos and the Siamese. They surround Upper Burma from east to north-west, and would ere this, but for the superior political cohesiveness of the Bur-

mans, have swarmed over the plains. In the eighth century they entered the basin of the Brahmaputra ; in the thirteenth they were its overlords. They subdued Assam, and the same lot befell them as had befallen the Norman conquerors of Britain two hundred years before : for daily contact with the vanquished people gradually obliterated the sturdier conditions of their warrior life, and to-day the Assamese rank as an inoffensive caste of Hindu mountaineers.

Robust, industrious, the Shan men and women possess the canny features, the blonde hair, and in youth the comely ruddiness, of highland dwellers. They have the business heads, the trading aptitudes, of their Chinese congeners. In one year alone 6,000 pedestrian traders and twice that number of laden bullocks have been known to descend from the Shan plateau in order to exchange commodities in the Mandalay bazaar. The men are excellent blacksmiths, skilled carpenters, and clever breeders of the powerful Shan buffalo. The women produce an embroidery of genuine art. Like the Gael, they fence in their crops, display no little skill as mechanical engineers with rude materials, and their system of terrace irrigation is beyond praise. The Shan tableland is yet destined to become one of the wheat-growing regions of the East. It already produces the grain that is required

for the commissariat, which has to feed not only the English regiments, but also the atta-eating Hindus. When the railway that is being brought to their doors crosses the threshold of the plateau, and brings the Shans within touch of the ports, the area under wheat cultivation will grow, and export will begin.

The states are ruled by native "sawbwas," each of whom is entitled to the glory of a white umbrella in proof of chieftaincy. The law administered in the Shan States, to cite the official report of the Government of Burma, is "the customary law of the states, so far as it is in accordance with justice, equity, and good conscience, and not opposed to the spirit of the law in force in the rest of British India." In this spirit, Shanland for the Shans, the improvement effected by the British administration is a striking lesson in empire. The last Administration Report of the century is a record of peaceful triumph, placid almost to tameness. Its very phrases are commonplace—no incident—people prosperous—crime light—crops good—inter-state relations friendly—slavery abolished in Kengtung—new roads opened—bridges and other public works constructed—no dacoities. To take one example, the revenue of the Hsipaw State, whose sawbwa sits in the Legislative Council, was Rs. 3,02,000; its expenditure,

Rs. 3,17,091. This is the seedtime ; the harvest—of timber, wheat, tea, potatoes—will follow in due time.

The hill tribes of the Arakan ridge, whose waters flow on the one side into the Irawadi and on the other into the Bay of Bengal, are generically classed as Chins. Their number, according to the census of 1901, is 85,000. They are a wild people, whose predatory ways have been fostered by the ease with which for generations they found themselves able to support existence by the nimble device of swooping down upon the timid villages of the plains at harvest time, and carrying away whatever they willed. They have been largely augmented—even if, as Sir Arthur Phayre maintained, they were not wholly formed—by bands of soldiery left behind in the hills during the centuries when the peninsula was the arena of perpetual strife. One of their chiefs was sentenced to imprisonment in 1901 for the truculent offence, to which he was addicted, of biting off a man's ears. The Chin exquisite winds his hair into a topknot, into which he intertwines coils of beads and tassels of goats' hair. The Chin maiden, when she has left childhood behind, is tattooed in parallel lines of uncomely blue upon her face, an indelible mark of ownership should she be carried away in a border raid,

The dacoities of the Upper Chindwin which marked the early years of British rule were aggravated by the imperfect protection afforded by the British garrison in the regions beyond the administrative border. A policy of gradual disarmament had the effect in some quarters of embittering the resistance of the Chin marauders. In 1892 the Chin hills were placed by the Indian Government under the direct control of Burma, and at the end of that year a detachment of native troops was cut up by the Chins in the vicinity of Fort White. The measures taken to punish this act of treachery were prompt and decisive. During the eight months of the dry season a force of 2,600 troops broke up into scattered outposts, and co-operated with the police of the Chindwin. There was a loss of seventy men of all ranks—almost as many as during the first year of the annexation. But the most hostile tribes were thoroughly cowed, 1,600 stand of arms were confiscated, and by the end of the following year it was found possible to replace the military force by police sentries.

The task of reducing these frontier hills to order has been long and arduous, and is not yet at an end. Although there is now no disturbance in the Chin regions of the Arakan tracts, or of the Lower Chindwin, where indeed the ingenuity of the civil superin-

tendent has organized a company of Chin police to carry out his orders, the northern Chin hills are still centres of discontent. In the spring of 1899, for example, there was an abortive rising which caused some trouble. But the ringleaders for the most part died or surrendered, and although some of them were sentenced to the death penalty, the Lieutenant-Governor commuted the sentence in token of acknowledgment that the delinquents came in of their own will. At the beginning of the new century, as the report for 1900-1 shows, it was possible to record a growth of trade between the hills and the plains. Chin parties now leave their fastnesses in order to exchange their sugar-cane and beeswax for rice, salt, and cattle; 500 of them came in voluntarily for vaccination, and 250 of them repaired to the British courts for the settlement of their civil disputes.

Of all these frontier races there is none that exercises a greater fascination for the ethnographer than that of the Kachins. They are the caterans of the East—the clannish, impetuous, hardy highwaymen of that labyrinth of mountains over whose passes run the immemorial paths of caravans. Known in Assam as the Singhpos, they spread a network of roving lawlessness around the frontier tracts to Bhamo, and thence through the Shan States as far south as Chiengmai, in the heart

of Siam itself. Square of face, strong of jaw, oblique of eye, they are simple children of Nature, with no letters, no art, the barest rudiments of natural religion ; and they are a force to be reckoned with in the administrative development of the peninsula. They command the approach to the jade mines ; they stand as hostile sentinels over the British passes from Burma into Upper Assam ; it is they who disturb the telegraph route now extended into the interior of China ; and until they are subdued there is no hope of the peaceful restoration of the trade that formerly filtered across the border between Tibet and Yunnan, Burma and Siam.

They have been known—they and the red Karens—to capture as many as 1,200 slaves in the course of a single season. A ready market was found for the prisoners in Chieng-mai, whence they were sent down the Menam into the lower plains of Siam. When Mr. (now Sir) Frederick Fryer was in Bhamo, in the cold weather of 1892, he held a durbar which was attended by the neighbouring Kachin chiefs. He told them that while the hereditary slaves, and those who voluntarily surrendered themselves to satisfy debt, would not be interfered with, the Government would not assist masters in capturing runaways, and slavery by capture was absolutely prohibited. A tribute of Rs. 2½ per household was fixed,

not as a source of revenue, but as a visible token of submission. The collection of this tax was not pressed unduly, but the Kachin tribes have gradually accustomed themselves to the visits of the revenue officers, and during 1900-1 the tribute of Rs. 31,355 was collected without difficulty. Indeed, notice was then given that after April, 1902, the Kachin tribute in the Mogaung sub-division would be doubled.

These mountaineers inhabit villages whose approaches are carefully guarded by an avenue of bamboo posts, often 200 yards long, and the fragments of cloth and metal that hang upon the rattans by which the fabric is bound together proclaim their faith in the prime need for propitiating the guardian "nats." Human sacrifice is reported to be not unknown. The chief receives a contribution in kind—one leg, for example, of every slaughtered animal. Their sole weapon is a *da*, fashioned by themselves with the aid of a rude hammer and a ruder anvil of stone. They are capable of enduring great fatigue, and it is one of the triumphs of British procedure to have induced a company of them to enter the public service in the peaceful occupation of erecting telegraph posts in the upper valleys, while others forage for orchids for the button-holes of European exquisites. There was a time when these hillmen were wont to

cut up the mysterious wires for the purpose of making bullets for their matchlocks, and in the early days many a young warrior knew the feeling of a wire plug within his bones. Married women indicate their status by tattooing both knees with deep black parallel lines. They live lives of drudgery, and one of the excitements of their career in these tame days of peace is to pay a visit to Bhamo, where they may be seen placidly inspecting the wares displayed by the Chinese and Hindu bazaar dealers for their advantage.

The pacification of the Kachin hills has been at once aided and hindered by the lack of cohesion among the tribes. This is due to the prevalence of a system of blood feud, such as mars the lives of mountaineers everywhere. These feuds last for generations, and prevent the co-ordination of the tribes. Ten years ago it was explained to the Kachins that in future the British Government intended to settle their inter-tribal disputes. "Taking the law into their own hands," wrote the Chief Commissioner, "and raiding as hitherto, will disqualify the offender from redress, and will render him liable to punishment as well." The achievement of this task has not been without its tragedies. Early in 1893 Lieutenant Williams left Namkhan with a column for the Shan State of North Theinni, where the Kachins were

raiding—but he did not return. Indeed, the difficulties of the moment were such that all operations against the hill tribes were suspended for the time being, and the defence of the administrative boundary north of Bhamo was left to a force of 250 men.

The task has been pursued with vigour from year to year, but to this day the habits of centuries still burst forth in the inter-tribal relations of these hardy children of Nature. Thus in 1899 a certain family was suspected of having caused death among another tribe by the dread power of sorcery. Branches of this family were accordingly attacked in four different villages ; four persons were killed, eight were carried into slavery. The episode did not escape the attention of the long arm of British justice, and suitable punishment was inflicted by the deputy commissioner. As road-making progresses in the hill tracts the whole area of disturbance will shrink year by year, and this romantic region, this amphitheatre of outlawry, will come to know the meaning of the *pax Britannica*.

CHAPTER XIV

FRONTIER PROBLEMS

THE eastern and the western boundaries of Burma are of approximately equal value. Northward, the frontier fades into an indeterminate point on the confines of Tibet; southward, it ends in the acute promontory of Victoria Point. For 1,200 miles, from the Mergui islets to the estuary of the Naf, the frontier is the sea; thence, for 1,000 miles, it marches with the British frontier of Bengal and Assam. Hence the entire western boundary of this vast satrapy offers no diplomatic problems. The coast is British by virtue of the sea power of Britain. The integrity of the ports is guaranteed by the imperial navy, and the protection of Rangoon is entrusted to an excellent volunteer force, drilled in the

rudiments of port defence. The main enemy to be feared along the coast frontier is not man but nature, and the energies of the Government are absorbed in this direction by its warfare with the fickle sea. A lighthouse was erected at the mouth of the Rangoon river, another upon the oyster reef that lies off the port of Akyab ; the sea washed them both away, with all their peaceful garrison. Others have withstood the onslaught more successfully, and the huge light set up on the treacherous Alguada reef off Cape Negrais is one of the many triumphs of Indian engineering.

The problems presented by the north-west boundary of Burma are intestine. They will disappear when communications are improved. Had there been a railway through Manipur in 1891, Quinton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, and perhaps Grimwood, the British resident, might not have died. Lieutenant Grant, it is true, marched his little force of fifty Punjabis and thirty Gurkhas from the Chindwin across the frontier hills to Thobal, but he arrived only in time to teach the assassins a lesson, which they have not yet forgotten. As far back as 1825 the East India Company induced the Singhpo branch of the Kachin tribes to release their kidnapped slaves, and to guard the Patkai passes against the incursions of the Burmese, in exchange

for a promise of the lion's share of the commerce between Burma and Assam. That commerce, in its larger aspect, is yet to be ; less than a hundredth part of the trade of Assam crosses the land frontier to-day.

During the second war, also, the need for trans-frontier roads again became acute. Some of the Bengali troops—it was five years before the Mutiny—refused to lose caste by crossing the “foreign water.” Dalhousie was furious, and ordered the instant construction of a road from Chittagong to Akyab. But when he retired the work was abandoned, and to this day the scheme remains in its pigeon-hole, the neglected monument of a statesman's dream. Not until Colonel Forlong ran a mountain road through the Taunggup pass did Arakan possess a means of tapping the immense traffic of the mid-Irawadi valley.

Passing by the raids between Chittagong, the Lushais, and the western valleys, which are of Indian interest rather than Burmese, a word is needed as to certain current projects for making communication easy between the easternmost provinces of the empire. Of these there are four. The Assam railway already extends to Makum, on the westward face of the Patkai ; the Burma railway up the Mu valley has reached Myitkina. The opulent Hukong valley lies between them—

an inviting region of inconsiderable length—and when this is traversed, either by a railway or a metalled cart road, the task of pacifying the turbulent elements of the Kachin peoples will be brought within practicable dimensions. Rangoon may, indeed, at length become the eastern terminus of a line whose western end lies at Bombay. The strategic importance of such a road is amply attested by the fact that when, in 1888, Captain Michell succeeded in leading a survey party from Assam into the Hukong valley, the party under Captain Triscott, which was detailed to meet him from the Burma side, was compelled to retire discomfited.

A road from Manipur across the Kubo valley to the upper waters of the Chindwin is already opened, and it brings Mandalay within easy access. This route derives a special importance from the circumstance of its having been chosen by Lord Curzon of Kedleston for his viceregal progress from Kalka to Rangoon in the autumn of 1901. It has this advantage over the other—though each of them has merits of its own—that it is in more direct touch with Calcutta, and pierces a region already populous, whose development is retarded by the natural obstacles to continuous navigation offered by the shallows of the Chindwin river. It is an element of interest in this line of

communication, which at present is best suited for pack transport, that it perpetuates one of the traditional routes by which the first Aryan invaders of Burma entered the Irawadi valley. Its success hangs in a large measure upon the goodwill of the raja of Manipur, who holds the key of the pass.

Still another route is designed to leave the Chindwin in its lower basin, to creep up the valley of the Myitha, the tributary which is joined by the Manipur river, and so across the hills south of Lushai land into Chittagong. The argument for this road is the immense future that lies before Chittagong as a rival port to Calcutta, notwithstanding its situation at some distance up a difficult river.

Lastly, there is already a good cart road from Minbu—an Irawadi township midway between Mandalay and Prome—over the Yoma ridge through Napeh, and so along the Aeng pass to Akyab. The journey of 100 miles between Minbu and the Aeng pass can already be accomplished in ten marches. This route would give Mandalay, the natural *dépôt* for Western China and Tibet, as well as the immense oil and cotton belt to the south of it, a direct outlet to the coast, and would increase the importance of Akyab, with its land-locked estuarine harbour, at the expense of Rangoon. The interest of

these proposals for Rangoon lies in the fact that they shorten the distance between Mandalay and the coast. The route from Mandalay to Akyab is 260 miles, to Chittagong 280 miles, to Rangoon 380 miles long.

But these western problems are simple and domestic in comparison with those that arise out of the international entanglements of the eastern frontier. Again and again, throughout this brief chronicle, the importance of Bhamo has appeared upon the surface of the story. Situate in an enchanting plain, 900 miles from the river mouth, it has stood during long centuries on the threshold of Central Asia. It was known to Marco Polo; it finds a place upon the famous map of the universe that was drawn by Fra Mauro in the middle of the fifteenth century. The grievances of its Chinese merchant settlers led to the futile invasions which came to an end when the Lord of the White Elephant, by the treaty of Bhamo in 1769, agreed to those decennial missions between Ava and Peking which deflected the policy of Lord Salisbury a century after.

In 1795 Symes reported that the cotton trade between Burma and Yunnan was of large dimensions, and in 1862 Colonel Phayre endeavoured without avail to introduce into his treaty with Mindon Min a clause permitting British traders to reside at Bhamo, and to

travel freely across the frontier into south-west China. In the following year, however, Dr. Clement Williams received authority to proceed up the river, and he succeeded in reaching the romantic defile that lies to the north of Bhamo, and marks the limit of steam navigation. The ampler treaty of 1867 conceded to Britain the right to navigate the Irawadi to its full extent, and to establish a resident at Bhamo. Under this sanction the "Irrawaddy Flotilla Company" put on a monthly service between that town and Mandalay.

Before these developments occurred, however, an expedition started under the leadership of Major Sladen, one of Mindon's steamers being placed at his disposal. With an armed escort of fifty men the party reached Momein, a Chinese city lying between the supposed boundary of Burma and the upper waters of the Salwin, 130 miles north of Bhamo. Much valuable information about the caravan routes was secured, but this significant fact was observed, that whereas ten years before there was an annual trans-frontier trade of £500,000, largely transacted during the Bhamo fair, the political events of the intervening years had virtually brought the trade to an end. For while the Taiping rebellion was raging in the populous heart of China, Mussulman settlers, known to us

as the Panthays, had seized western Yunnan, and established an autocracy over four millions of Chinese, under the rule of Sultan Suleiman. The internecine conflicts that arose out of this usurpation unsettled the country, and caused the English explorers to abandon further exploration of this mysterious land.

In 1874, with the quiet prescience of the statesman, Lord Salisbury directed Colonel Horace Browne to resume the attempt to travel past Momein into the valley of the Yangtse, and so to reach Shanghai. By that time the Panthay power had been ruthlessly crushed, and Suleiman himself had committed suicide. Mr. Margary received instructions to leave Peking and meet the Burma party on the frontier. Within four months this intrepid traveller was in Bhamo, and in a few days he set out with Colonel Browne upon the return journey. But at Manwaing, midway between Bhamo and Momein, Margary was brutally murdered; a mob attacked the expedition, which, after some fighting, was compelled to retire. Eighteen months later a British force of 300 men met a party of Chinese officials on the scene of the murder, and proved to the populace that the long arm of Britain could reach them when it willed. Some monetary compensation was made by the court of Peking to the relatives of the

martyred explorer, but to this day there are those who regret the leniency with which the episode was treated by England.

In those early days the materials of trade with which the caravans concerned themselves were purely local. Yunnan contributed raw silk to the Italian hand-loomers which Mindon set up at Mandalay, besides orpiment, quicksilver, tin, musk, and honey. The traders took back with them raw cotton, edible 'birds' nests, sapphires for the caps of mandarins, jade for the Momein carvers, jay feathers, and salt. Britain sent little beyond a few woollen cloths. The importance of the cotton trade, which Symes noticed at the outset of the century, may be gauged from the circumstance that when, a few years later on, the boundary region between Burma and Yunnan was in a blaze, the quantity of cotton that found its way down to Rangoon in excess of the normal trade suddenly increased by 4,000 tons.

The caravan men travel at the rate of about fifteen miles a day, and each carries a load of $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. With bullocks, the slower rate of progress lengthens the journey by a third at least, but each animal carries 2 cwt., inclusive of its gear. The Chinese caravans make much use of mules, which are bred in Yunnan in large quantities, there being regular establishments where as many as

3,000 mules at a time are under training. These hardy animals are of great importance for commissariat purposes, and their growing scarcity has made it necessary to contemplate the expediency of founding a breeding-ground on the high land of the Shan plateau, between Mandalay and the Siamese frontier.

But the resumption of the caravan trade upon the old traditional routes—and they are probably the best—cannot be reckoned upon until the diplomatic complexities that haunt this region are straightened out. The occupation of Mandalay was scarcely achieved before China put in claims to the suzerainty of the remoter regions. These claims were all the harder to resist because at first our administrative frontier did not extend anywhere near the actual boundaries of the province. China demanded the resumption of the decennial missions to which she was entitled by the treaty of 1769, ignoring the fact that the treaty was imposed upon her by a victorious Burmese monarch and involved the reciprocation of the embassies. It was upon these terms that Lord Salisbury assented to the restoration of the missions, and in the summer of 1886 it was agreed that they should be continued by members of the Burmese race, that the frontier should be delimited by a boundary commission, and

that the Peking Government recognized the freedom of England to do whatever she deemed fit in all matters whatsoever pertaining to the authority and rule that she was now exercising in Burma. Later on in the year the demands of the Chinese boundary commissioners proved to be so excessive that the negotiations ceased. In 1892 Chinese emissaries were found to be inciting the Kachins to revolt, and also setting up false boundary posts.

In the spring of 1894 a convention relative to Burma and Tibet was made with China. Under this convention Chinese vessels were accorded a free passage on the Irawadi, the old claims to the territory north of Bhamo were abandoned, and Burma gave up in exchange her prescriptive right to Munglem and Kianghung, two states between the Salwin and the Mekong, on condition that no portion of either of them should ever be ceded to another nation without the previous assent of Britain. In the following year China was induced, by the unjustifiable pressure of France, to cede to her that part of Kianghung which lay east of the Mekong. In January, 1896, an Anglo-French declaration was made, under which both parties agreed never to acquire exclusive rights in the great province of Yunnan, whose frontier marched on one side with Burma and on the

other with French Indo-China. This declaration paved the way for an agreement, entered into with China early in the following year, under which a district embracing 1,500 square miles, including Kokang, was acquired by Britain as a solatium for having been ignored in the Franco-Chinese settlement of 1895.

The activity of the colonial party in France did not cease, and in 1898 permission was secured to extend the Red River railway into Yunnan itself, while China herself was bound not to alienate that province to any other power. In November, 1899, M. Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, reminded the Chamber of Deputies of the Anglo-French declaration of 1896. In July, 1901, the same statesman, in a note to the great Powers, urged a joint policy for maintaining the integrity of the Chinese empire, a policy to which England and Germany were already committed by the Anglo-German agreement of October, 1900.

While it is clear, therefore, that the responsible ministers of the Republic disclaim any present intention of pursuing aims in Yunnan inimical to Britain, it cannot be denied that the existence of a French railway will place in their hands a weapon of aggression that may in course of time be captured by the extremer spirits of the French colonial party. The railway cannot in the ordinary course be

completed for several years, and in the meanwhile it may be well to remember that, under the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1894, as modified three years later, "the Chinese Government agrees hereafter to consider whether the conditions of trade justify the construction of railways in Yunnan, and, in the event of their construction, agrees to connect them with the Burmese lines."* This convention, moreover, sanctioned the development of the caravan route from Bhamo *via* Manwaing and Momein to Talifu, and agreed that any other routes recommended by the boundary commissioners should be opened on the same terms.

The delimitation of the frontier was completed as far as the Salwin early in 1899, but in the following year Major Kiddle and Mr. Sutherland, attached to the British column, were murdered by men of the savage Wa tribe, east of the Salwin. Reparation was sternly exacted by both British and Chinese troops, sixty Was being put to death, and 2,000 of their huts burned to the ground.

In the autumn of 1901 Mr. Cholmeley, the commissioner of the Mandalay division, reported the existence of much dissatisfaction among the frontier Kachins, because of the inability of our arms to protect them against trans-frontier raids. He feared the resump-

* Article XII.

tion of blood feud, unless the Chinese could be brought to book, and was of opinion that the trans-frontier Kachins should be treated as independent tribes, seeing that the Chinese Government professed itself to be unable to keep them in order. This, however, opens a wide question, which might compel Britain to demand the rectification of our frontier so far as to embrace Manwaing and Momein, and thus extend British rule to the whole western bank of the Salwin. Meanwhile the extension of military outpost roads along the existing boundary will do much to quell the disturbances caused by the truculent marauders of the Bhamo hinterland.

The relations of Burma with the kingdom of Siam are of a friendlier kind. Already in 1874 a treaty was concluded with the present king Chulalonkorn, to secure the protection of British subjects residing in Chiengmai, and to repress violent frontier crimes. The treaty was ineffectual, and in 1878 accordingly Major Street visited Chiengmai and Bangkok, with the result that a British vice-consulate was established at the inland town. In 1883 it was agreed that British subjects, when crossing the frontier into Siam, should provide themselves with passports, and two years later—two days after the occupation of Mandalay—an article was signed which provided for the mutual extradition of

criminals. This provision was of the utmost value in preserving the peace, and enabled our arms to concentrate attention upon the more turbulent frontier regions to the north. In 1889 the regulations were prescribed under which a British consular court is empowered to dispose of cases affecting British subjects according to the law of England, when Siamese law might result in injustice. It is an interesting fact, however, that the court has had to intervene thrice only during its history.

The Anglo-French agreement of January, 1896, to which reference has already been made, made the Mekong river the boundary between the Burmese Shan States and French Indo-China. The Siamese state of Zimme is principally concerned in the extraction of timber, and the import of teak into Burma during 1900-1 amounted to 13½ lakhs. Postal communication with Chiengmai is maintained, not through Bangkok, but through Maulmain. The Siamese race is of Shan origin, its Buddhism is essentially Burmese in spirit, and the enormous development of the resources of Siam in recent years is due in the main to the tact and energy of British civil officers lent by Burma for that purpose. One of them has reorganized its finances, and its land revenue is being rapidly reformed on the Burma model; another has created an

excellent police, stiffened with a few Afghans. A third has reorganized the forest department, a fourth is making a detailed survey, a fifth is in charge of public education. With these friendly elements exercising a profound influence upon the present destinies of Siam, the frontier problems that concern the thousand miles of the Burmo-Siamese boundary become almost domestic rather than international.

The trade across the land frontier of Burma is registered in a rough and ready fashion at twenty-eight stations. Of these, twelve deal with Western China and eight with Siam and Zimme. Here are the figures recorded for 1900-1 :—

Imports from	Lakhs	Exports from	Lakhs
Western China	29	Western China	32
Siam and Zimme	31	Siam and Zimme	26

These amounts include movements of treasure, but one or two typical classes of merchandise may be cited in order to show the main direction of commerce. The Yunnan caravans brought down 18,218 animals, 554 tons of hides, 660 tons of orpiment, and raw silk to the value of 4 lakhs. They took back with them 1,160 tons of raw cotton, 1,032 tons of yarn, European cotton goods to the value of $3\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, woollen goods to the value of $2\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, 75 tons of tobacco, 584 tons of

fish, and 1,120 tons of salt. The Siamese caravans brought 8,224 living animals, raw and manufactured silk to the value of $2\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, and took back with them Burmese silks of the value of $1\frac{3}{4}$ lakhs, together with 33 tons of cotton yarn, and 5 lakhs worth of cotton and woollen goods.

As the result of his inquiries as leader of the Commercial Mission organized by the Blackburn Chamber of Commerce in 1896-7, Mr. Consul Bourne reported to Lord Salisbury that if the Burma railways were extended to the frontier in various directions—as is now being done—it would not be necessary to wait for their extension into Yunnan in order to secure that large development of commerce which is rightly placed in the forefront of our imperial aims in the Indo-Chinese peninsula. “I believe,” he wrote, “the existing means of transit by caravan are sufficient for the present population and resources of the province; railways and mining should come together.” Authorities of equal competence hold the like views in regard to our trans-frontier relations with Siam.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRAIL OF THE WEST

FOR two thousand years the trade routes of Burma followed the river courses, or meandered, in the immemorial manner of the East, over plain and hill along the paths of caravans. To this day the making of roads is alien to the genius of the Burmese race. One of the first tasks to which the British rulers devoted themselves was the construction of cart roads, to replace the tortuous pathways worn through the jungle by the tramp of many generations of mules and elephants, ponies and pack-bullocks. For this purpose they were often compelled to import natives of India to serve as navvies, and at the end of 1900 the mileage maintained by the Public Works Department reached the excellent total of 6,220 miles, of which one-fourth are metalled roads, and for the most part are the cyclist's delight. A recent census records the presence of 438,000 carts in Burma.

The treaty of 1865 was followed immediately by the establishment of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. Comprising at first a few steamboats of moderate size, the company's fleet has grown in importance year after year, until to-day it consists of 82 steamboats and passenger launches, 8 tug-boats, and 156 barges. The largest of these craft are huge paddle-boats, 350 feet in length, with a tonnage of 1,000 tons, capable of conveying about 2,000 passengers. A regular service is maintained between Bhamo and the coast, there is a service on the Chindwin up to the extreme limit of navigation, the creeks of the delta are traversed by a host of launches, and at the end of 1900 the company acquired the fleet of steamers running on the Salwin and its tributary streams, in the district whose head-quarters are at Maulmain.

The flotilla possesses its own dockyard at Dalla, opposite to Rangoon, and there is an effective service of pilots and surveyors, whose duties involve a constant patrol of the river for the purpose of marking out the channel, as modified from season to season by the ever-shifting sand-banks of this treacherous waterway. While it may be admitted that the company has earned excellent profits upon the virtual monopoly it has enjoyed, it has undoubtedly rendered material aid in the development of the resources of

the province. Without its flotilla the war of annexation would have been a task as laborious as the campaigns of 1823-5 and 1852, whose commanders were hampered by the lack of facilities for swift communication.

The construction of irrigation canals in Upper Burma is a task to which the Imperial Government has given the fullest attention. Two works of immense importance have been undertaken, the effect of which will be to increase the arable wealth of the Upper Irawadi beyond reckoning. One of these, known as the Mandalay Canal, has cost 32 lakhs, and was completed just in time to permit of its being opened by the viceroy during his visit to the province in the autumn of 1901. The canal has a length of forty miles, with distributing allies covering a total length of ninety miles, and it will permit of the effective irrigation of 80,000 acres. Another project, in the vicinity of Shwebo—halfway to Bhamo—has just been sanctioned, and when completed, several years hence, it will provide an irrigation area of no less than 150,000 acres. It is by such means as these that the enormous area of cultivable land at present lying waste will be brought within the boundaries of the opulent agricultural system of the northern divisions.

But the trail of the West, which is fast changing the face of the peninsula, is

essentially the railway. The first section, that from Rangoon to Prome, was opened in 1877. Eight years later another line, following the course of the Sittang valley as far as Taungngu, brought Karenni within touch of the coast, and enabled General Prendergast to send a land party northwards to co-operate with the river force during the advance upon Mandalay. Three years after the annexation this railway was extended to Mandalay, and the work of surveying the western basin of the Irawadi, with a view to a northward extension, was begun. The terminus lay at Sagaing, upon the right bank of the river, opposite to Ava, and by the summer of 1891 the Mu valley was opened up as far as Shwebo. A huge bridge is now to be made across the river, in order to connect Sagaing with Mandalay.

These achievements were not made without a serious sacrifice of life, several of the survey officers being brutally murdered by miscreant Burmans, whose opposition to the peaceful railway development of the country caused some delay in the progress of the work. The same year, 1891, witnessed the acceptance by the Imperial Government of a project for the extension of the Mandalay line towards the north-east. Passing through Thibaw and Lashio, in the heart of the northern Shan States, it had for its goal the Kunlon Ferry

upon the Upper Salwin, 230 miles from Mandalay. The intention of the parties who undertook this enterprise was to provide a ready means of access to the threshold of Western Yunnan. In the following year it was decided to carry the Mu Valley line past Mogaung to Myitkyina, in the heart of the Kachin country, 331 miles from Mandalay, and so to bring the northern boundary of the province within easy administrative control.

In the summer of 1897 Messrs. N. M. Rothschild & Sons issued the prospectus of the Burma Railway Company, with a share capital of £2,000,000, formed to take over the existing State lines, and to complete the sanctioned extensions. Interest at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. was guaranteed by the Imperial Government, with an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. during the first four years, and a participation in the surplus profits, under which a bonus of 1 per cent. was declared for the last year of the century. The contract is terminable at the end of twenty-five years at the option of the Government, with redemption at par.

A certain romantic interest has attached to the railway operations in the eye of the public because of the dramatic incidents that have attended the race for the Kunlon Ferry, an enterprise which, as we have seen, elicited a counter-move on the part of the French colonial party in Indo-China in the

shape of a projected extension of the Red River railway to Yunnan-fu. The original survey of Mr. Bagley—who has since been transferred to the north-west Indian railway system—was modified in order to include Maymyo, a hill station which was selected by the local government as a sort of Burmese Simla. So much has been written about the geographical conditions by which railway development in Upper Burma is beset that it will be of service to present the levels of the Mandalay-Kunlon route in a tabular form.

	Miles.	Feet above Sea level.
Mandalay Terminus	—	250
Tonbo	10	264
Maymyo	38	3,515
Gokteik Gorge {	South Edge 72 ...	2,800
	Bottom ... 80 ...	1,300
	North Edge 86 ...	2,700
Gokteik	88	3,047
Thibaw	130	1,300
Lashio	170	2,700
Kunlon Ferry... ..	230	1,400

It will thus be perceived that the line crosses a shelf upon the southern slope of the Shan plateau, whose peaks rise to a maximum height of 4,500 feet. The temperature of Maymyo is about 20 degrees Fahr. below that of Mandalay all the year round, and for the first time in the history of Burma bungalows are being erected, upon the slopes of this delightful hill station, with genuine

chimney stacks, which carry off the smoke of open English hearths. The gorge to the east of it is a forked entry into the heart of the pine-clad hills, and its vertical section resembles a funnel, the lowermost 600 feet being an almost perpendicular drop. The upper lip of the funnel has a breadth as the crow flies of three or four miles. The gorge slopes inwards until the two edges approach within a distance varying from 150 to 500 feet.

The lively Chaungzon torrent, which drains the cañon, is spanned by a series of three natural bridges, whose rocky abutments meet in a crown 400 feet thick, poised 500 feet above the bed of the channel. One of these has been used for many generations as a mule track by the caravan traders from the Chinese frontier. It was resolved by the intrepid engineers, to whom the task of surmounting the natural obstacles presented by this picturesque gorge was entrusted, to utilize this massive arch. They made of it the foundation of a central tower, upon which to rest a bridge that promised from its inception to become one of the wonders of the world. When tenders were called for it was found that the lowest British tender was £118,000, and the work was accordingly entrusted to the Pennsylvania Steel Company, who contracted to erect the bridge for

£66,000, within half the time required by the promptest British firm. The bridge has now been completed, although a sum of £19,000 in excess of the contract price has been claimed because of the loss of time suffered from the fact that the line was not ready when required for the transport of materials. The viaduct is a steel structure 2,260 feet long, in thirty-three spans varying from 40 to 120 feet in length, and its total weight is 4,311 tons. The trestle towers vary in height from 45 to 320 feet, the highest—about 250 tons in weight—being poised upon a concrete pillar 20 feet high, formed of English cement. At this critical point there is an almost perpendicular drop of 820 feet, from the deck road running across the superimposed girders to the tumbling rapids below. It is as if one were to erect on the summit of St. Paul's Cathedral a steel column of its own height.

The steel work was run up in ten months by a staff of twenty American engineers, a dozen sailors from Rangoon, chosen for their skill in climbing, and 500 coolies recruited from Calcutta and Bombay. The fatal casualties were three. An engineer died of dysentery, and when, after the bridge was finished, the travelling crane was being taken to pieces, two coolies fell from a height of 200 feet and were killed. An engine and boiler were at the time suspended in mid air, and by the

error of a coolie in charge of a rope the huge mass swung over and collided with the derrick mast. The foreman was caught by a rope and lifted to a height of several yards. As he descended he encountered two other coolies clinging to the falling mast. He grappled them with both hands, and their lives were saved.

Since the line was first projected the Imperial authorities appear to have weakened in their resolution to reach the Salwin river. The significant announcement has been made that, for the present at least, Lashio, sixty miles from the ferry, is the goal of their desires. Should the race for Yunnan be suspended in this direction, there are those who hope that attention will be turned to the Hukong valley, upon which Mr. Way reported favourably in 1896, as the result of his survey of this route for connecting the railway systems of Burma and Assam. This project would give an impetus to the immigration, into the sparsely peopled districts of Burma, of the teeming populations of north India, who are at present deterred in a large measure by their caste prejudice from crossing the "foreign water."

The argument for an easterly railway extension into China for the purpose of trade is less urgent, and the policy of the local government is being concentrated upon rail-

way development in the rich districts of the deltaic region. Thus a line connecting Bassein with Rangoon is nearly completed, and another, designed to bring Maulmain within reach of the capital, is at length under survey. The coast districts of Tenasserim, which have hitherto been unduly neglected, will have to be taken in hand. A mention of the mono-rail, erected between two villages in the vicinity of Maulmain, will doubtless be received by Manchester and Liverpool with a certain tolerant amusement. The motive power was provided by a pony running between two shafts, parallel to the car, and a maximum speed of six miles per hour was attained. But it did not succeed.

The mail and telegraph routes throughout the province are increasing year by year. In 1900 there were 12,786 miles of telegraph wire in use. Mails were carried over the 980 miles* of railway, as well as 6,120 miles covered by the steamboat service, besides 850 miles traversed by pony or mailcart, and 2,712 miles by "dak" runners and boats. The number of letters and parcels conveyed over this network of communications was 14½ millions, and it is a significant feature of this prosperous department that one-fourth of these communications were addressed in Burmese or Chinese characters.

* At the end of that year 1,125 miles of railway were open for traffic.

The influence of Western ideas is to be observed in the *personnel* of the post offices, which in 1900 reported two Burmese women clerks, eight of their Eurasian and European sisters, and seven pensioned soldiers. Lastly, not the least of the triumphs of British rule is the success that has attended the effort to introduce habits of thrift among this thriftless race, by means of the savings bank. In the year under review this branch of post-office work recorded 52,690 accounts, with an average balance of £ 10 apiece.

CHAPTER XVI

RANGOON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

TO the philosophic student of the Orient the story of Rangoon is a mine of inexhaustible interest. When, 2,500 years ago, the two legendary princes, Pu and Tapaw, after a wander-year in India, deposited the sacred hairs of Gaudama upon the gleaming hill which they encountered twenty miles from the river's mouth, they builded better than they knew. During all those centuries the Golden Pagoda was the Mecca of the Buddhist. And when, at length, Alaungpaya's conflict with the Talaings ended in the firm establishment of the new throne, the pious empire-builder came down to the sacred relic-shrine, and raised around it a new city. He gave to it the name of

Yangon, "the strife is ended." In the mouth of the Englishman this new name became Rangoon.

Lovers of epigram call Rangoon a suburb of Madras. It is that and more. Already in the sixteenth century traders of south India dominated the commerce of Pegu, and to-day these immigrant races control the retail trade in many imported wares: they are an influential mercantile community, they are the money-lenders of the Asiatic races, they provide the city with its bread and meat and dairy produce, they wash its clothing, drive its gharries, navigate its ferry boats and sampans, make its bricks, conduct its fishing industry. These sad-eyed exile races fetch and carry, hew wood and draw water, repair the civic roads, guard public and private buildings, and provide domestic service. But they find themselves in rivalry with Chinese migrants from Singapore and Canton, who do the carpentry and smith work, cultivate fruit and vegetables, and prove themselves more patient, more enterprising, and, it may be added, more straightforward in their trading. Besides these large communities there are others, gathered together out of every nation under heaven. Rangoon is more than a suburb of Madras; it is the true cosmopolis of the East.

At the end of the eighteenth century

Michael Symes reported the presence in Rangoon of a hundred Europeans. The number of merchants was small, of ship-masters still smaller ; and the reputation of the remainder was not high. The European influx began after the earliest war, but it has not kept pace with the growth of the native population. Here are the census figures for the city :—

1852.	1872.	1881.	1891.	1901.
25,000	89,897	134,176	180,324	232,326*

Let us analyze the figures for 1891. Of Europeans there were 4,284 ; of Eurasians and native Christians, 8,394 ; Hindus, 57,845 ; Mohammedans, 28,836 ; Parsis, 33 ; Buddhists and Jains, 79,857 ; Aborigines, 1,075.

The Buddhists and Jains necessarily include the large Chinese population, as well as natives of the country, and it will thus be perceived that the number of pure Burmese in the capital of the province is a small fragment of its total population.

The ethnic fusion that is going on at the heart of the province is producing a new race. The marriage of natives of India with Burmese women results in a hybrid people who possess the vices of both parents without their virtues. It is otherwise with the union of the Chinese with the Burman stocks, whose offspring are of pure Mongoloid birth, and

* The population of Mandalay in 1901 was 182,498.

combine with the canny resource of the father the capable genius of the mother. These Burman Chinese are among the finest of the native peoples, and are believed by some far-seeing administrators to have the future of the race within their grasp. For the pure-blooded Burman is retiring before the stronger vitality of the immigrant peoples, and the land will one day pass into the occupation of newer racial elements, with broader aims and more resolute ambitions.

The position of Rangoon as the portal of the province has caused the development of its shipping to be even more striking than that of its population. In 1811 the annual number of entries into the port reached twenty; in fifteen years it had trebled. Between the first and the second wars the average number of arrivals and departures was 125, of which twenty only were of European vessels. The total import and export trade of the port since that time may be thus presented:—

1854.	1866-7.	1881-2.	1891-2.	1899-1900.
3	294	978	1,804	2,436 lakhs

These figures give to Rangoon 78 per cent. of the total trade of the province, Maulmain coming next with 10 per cent., Akyab with 8 per cent., Bassein with 4 per cent. Of the export trade 79 per cent. is in rice, 9 per cent. in teak, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in catch, 2 in cotton, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in hides, 1 in rubber, and rather less in jade. All other

items of export thus form but 4 per cent. of the whole.

Of the present-day aspect of the city this is not the place to speak. It has gathered around it most of the adjuncts of the civilized Orient. It has its municipality, its Shone system of drainage, its steam tramways, its high-pressure water supply, its hospitals, clubs, and pleasure grounds, its agri-horticultural gardens, and it is about to possess a worthier museum. Its vital statistics are worthless, but when it has improved the conditions under which the Indian settlements live their lives it will become one of the healthiest cities in tropical Asia. In 1879 good water was introduced into the suburbs of Pazundaung, where the native rice-mill hands are huddled; the cholera mortality dropped at once from 231 to 65. In 1883 water was laid on to the town itself, and the cholera bill dropped from 155 to 59.

The future of the Burman is an interesting problem. The education that is being offered to him enlarges his ideas, but it does not give him stamina, grit, resoluteness, ambition. He makes a poor doctor, is useless as an urban architect, incapable as an engineer, unreliable as a civil servant. The phenomenon that appeared in 1888, in the person of a Burmese law student at the Middle Temple who swept off the principal prizes of the year, was unique;

it has not been repeated. Mr. Chan Toon was made a judge in 1892, and his success has encouraged some others to enter the profession of the law. On the river front of remote Irawadi villages you will see bamboo huts bearing such a legend as "Maung Ko Than, Barrister," generally in English, sometimes in Burmese as well. It is the one vocation in which the Burman has succeeded in lifting himself outside the rut of the cultivator. Business partnerships between Europeans and Chinamen or natives of India are not unknown; with Burmans they would be an impracticable dream.

* * * * *

Since Burma first came into direct contact with the colonizing genius of the British in the East, its prosperity has grown by leaps and bounds. The life of the infant province has been lusty, and it cannot be doubted that it is destined to attain a yet more splendid prime.

POSTSCRIPT

AMONG all the books that have been written upon the subject of Burma there are three which stand out pre-eminently for their importance and interest. Sir Arthur Phayre's "History of Burma" is of standard excellence; Spearman's "British Burma Gazetteer," published by authority, is a mine of facts; "The Burman, His Life and Notions," by Sir J. G. Scott ("Shway Yoe"), is a book of singular fascination, a picture whose charm will endure when the customs which it describes have vanished from the land. Father San Germano's "Description of the Burmese Empire," and the stories of their missions told by Symes, Yule, and others, will ever retain their value in the eyes of the student. Captain Forbes's "British Burma and its People," Fytche's "Burma, Past and

Present," Scott's "Burma as it was, is, and will be," and Colquhoun's "Burma and the Burmans," are by writers of acknowledged authority.

The incidents of the earlier campaigns are narrated in Colonel Laurie's "Our Burmese Wars"; those of the Annexation in "The Coming of the Great Queen," by E. C. Browne, and Geary's "Burma After the Conquest." The minor races are treated in Macmahon's "Far Cathay," Colquhoun's "Amongst the Shans," and Smeaton's "Loyal Karens"; border problems are elucidated by Williams's "Through Burma to Western China," Anderson's "From Mandalay to Momein," and E. H. Parker's "Burma with Reference to Her Relations with China." The laborious "Burma, its People and Productions," by Dr. Mason, an American Baptist missionary, has been supplemented in special departments by Kurz's "Forest Flora," Oates's "Handbook to the Birds of British Burma," and Hume's "Game Birds of Burma." Dr. Forchhammer's reports as Government archæologist, Mr. Holt Hallett's addresses on commercial questions, and Dr. Watt's "Dictionary of the Economic Products of India," are the essential sources of information in their several branches, while the annual Administration reports and other official publications are the necessary material for the study of current history.

Mr. J. H. Ryley has recently published a careful essay upon the story of "Ralph Fitch" as recorded in Hakluyt, and the "Burma" of M. and B. Ferrars is a charming volume, into which the authors introduce a unique collection of photographs, illustrative of every department of Burmese life. As these pages pass through the press, the long-expected "Burma under British Rule, and Before," by Dr. Nisbet, is announced, and if the competency of its author—for several years a Conservator of Forests in the province—be any guide, the work should be of the utmost value.

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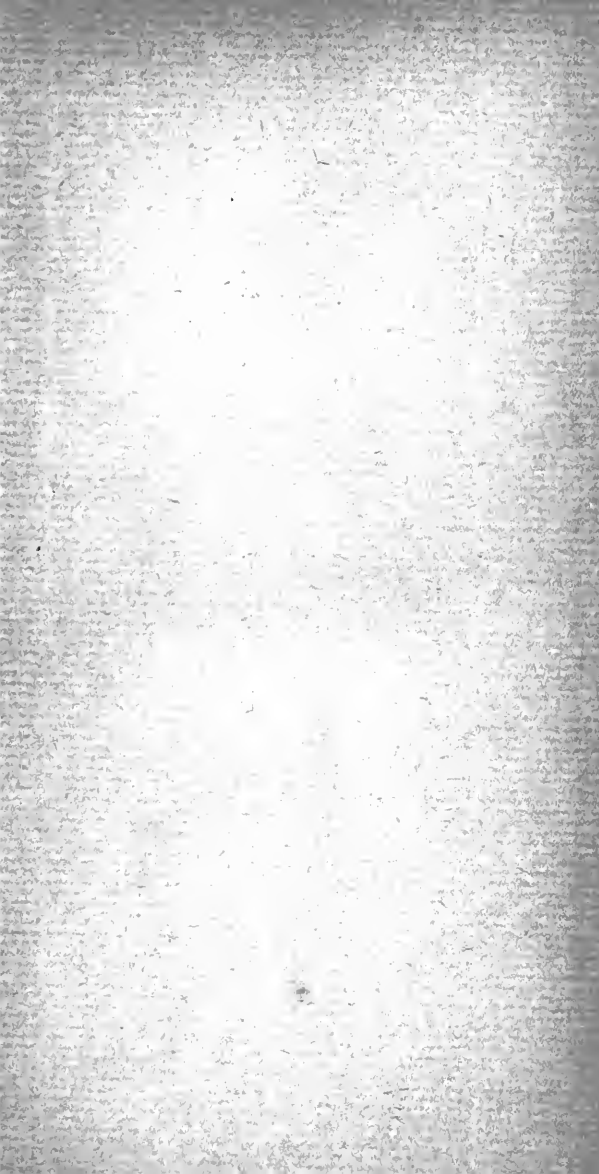
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